

British

# Archaeology

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**On the cover: From an ancient hill figure to a  
hoard buried after the Battle of Hastings,  
the stories inside reflect the excitement and  
variety of archaeology happening in Britain  
today – not least with our exclusive report on  
the final study of the Staffordshire Hoard**

## From the editor



Exactly ten years ago as this magazine hits the shops, I was standing in a queue that snaked around Birmingham Museum. It was cold. Near the front of the line was a sign that read, “Waiting time from this point 90 minutes”. Someone from the museum was reassuring the more distant public with a megaphone.

We were among the first to see objects from the Staffordshire Hoard. Terry Herbert found it in July, and the world heard the news in September. We knew there was a lot of gold, that it was Anglo-Saxon and that the artistry and craft were outstanding. Otherwise, there was little we could do but gasp in awe. Pieces were covered in mud. Who made them and when, what most of them were and why they were buried in a remote field, all were unanswered mysteries.

It’s taken ten years, much money and the work of many specialists, but at last, as Chris Fern reports on page 30, we are about to see the results of one of the most extraordinary archaeological research projects of our era. The Staffordshire Hoard can now be properly judged for what it tells us of its times.

In 1990 Kevin Leahy quoted *Beowulf*, describing the warrior king as he was buried with his riches:

“They let the ground keep that ancestral treasure, as useless to men now as it ever was.”

“Well,” added Leahy. “It’s not useless now.”

mike pitts

### DIG DEEP FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

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[donate.archaeologyuk.org](http://donate.archaeologyuk.org)

#### This issue’s contributors include



##### Gareth Williams

is curator of early medieval coinage at the British Museum. On page 14 he describes the historic interest of coins from one of the greatest medieval hoard finds of modern times



##### David Miles

was director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit when he excavated at the White Horse of Uffington. Now, on page 22 he reflects on the hill figure’s long and fascinating history



##### Lara Maiklem

is a publishing consultant obsessed with the Thames foreshore and what it reveals of London’s citizens. She extols the appeal of artefacts with no context on page 44

##### Radiocarbon dates

Unless otherwise noted, <sup>14</sup>C dates in *British Archaeology* are calibrated at 95% confidence (cal AD or cal BC, expressed as AD or BC), rounded out after Mook (1986). See “Radio-carbon dating” by M Christie *et al*, *WikiJournal of Science* (2018), DOI: 10.15347/wjs/2018.006









# British Archaeology

THE VOICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BRITAIN AND BEYOND



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**FIRST SIGHT**  
A unique Roman mosaic found near Boxford, Berkshire (News Nov/Dec 2017/157) was fully revealed in August. To scenes showing Bellerophon meeting Iobates and riding Pegasus has been added, among others, Pelops in a chariot race with Oenomaus competing to win his daughter Princess Hippodamia’s hand. The fourth century AD mosaic was reburied after the excavation. Room 4.7m wide. Photography Richard Miller

When he saw it, Rick growled through his beard, “This is not about *treasure*. This is about cultural resilience.” It’s about saying, this is yours. Everything you feared you’d lost, or never even knew you had. It’s here. It’s back.

*Rick Knecht reacts to a press report about an excavation at a Yup’ik village in Alaska, as described by Kathleen Jamie in Surfacing (September, and see feature May/Jun 2014/136)*



News is written  
by Mike Pitts

## Neolithic mound in Marlborough was not alone

It was less than ten years ago that a large mound in Marlborough, Wiltshire, was shown to be Neolithic in origin, making it the second tallest monument known from prehistoric Britain. Recent archaeological works ahead of developments in the town have found more Neolithic remains. The mound could have been part of a significant ritual and population centre comparable to those at Avebury and Stonehenge.

Now known as the Marlborough Mount, the motte of Marlborough

gave a similar date (News Jul/Aug 2011/119). A third mound (now flattened) at Marden in the Vale of Pewsey seems also to be of the same age (News Sep/Oct 2010/114).

Silbury and the Marden mound are associated with henge enclosures, where massive banks with internal ditches surround great open spaces beside streams. When the Marlborough dates were obtained, Jim Leary, the archaeologist who led the coring programme, wondered if there might be other Late Neolithic monuments nearby: "It is unlikely that the mound stood isolated in this landscape," he wrote. Contemporary Neolithic artefacts have now been found – there are none yet from the mound itself – and the search is on for a Marlborough henge enclosure.

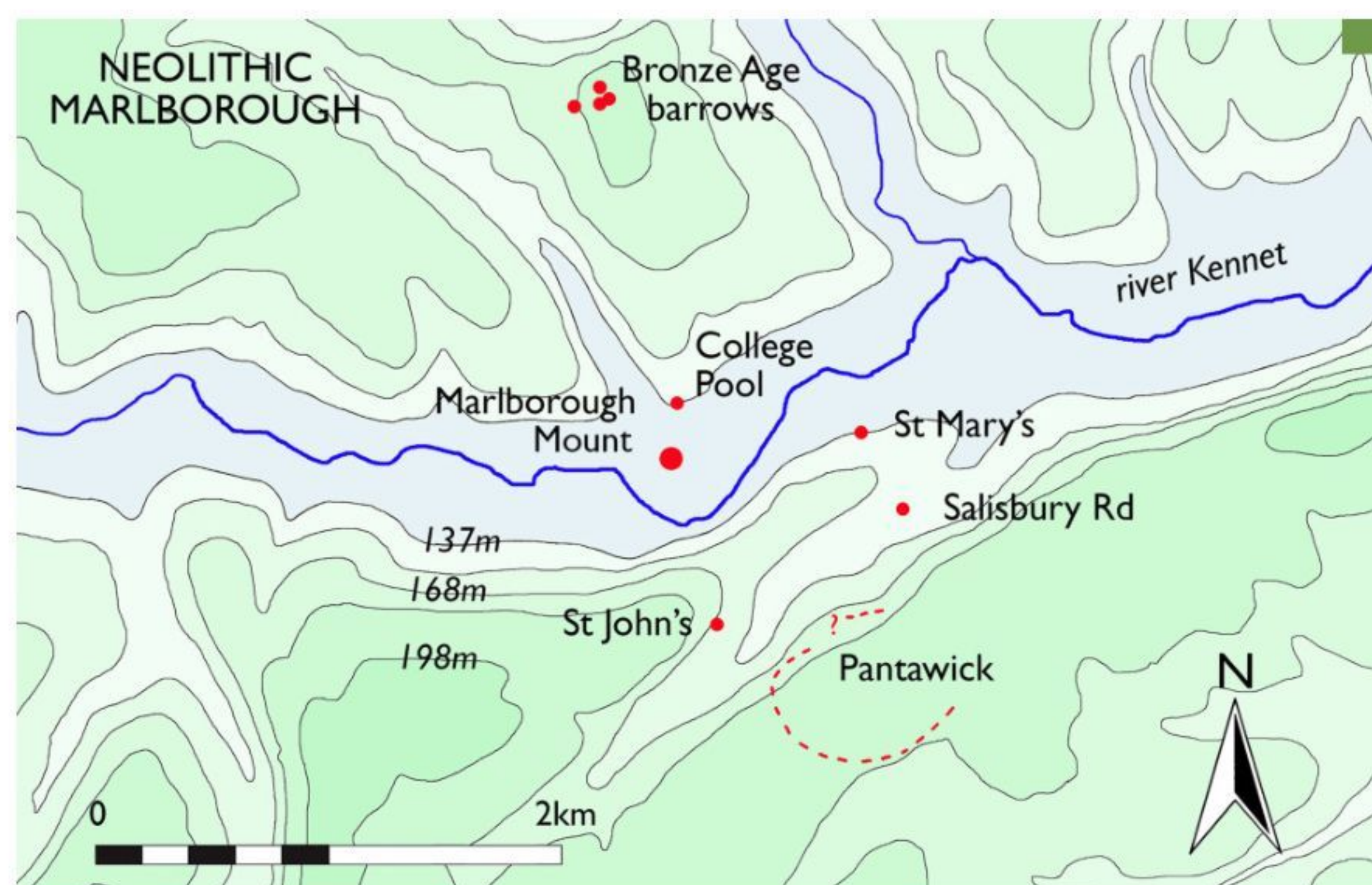
The first discovery was made in Duck's Meadow, south of the river, during evaluation work by Cotswold Archaeology ahead of the construction of a new St Mary's Primary School. In 1997 and 2016 a possible post-pit in a palisade trench and six pits or tree-throw holes produced a large collection of Late Neolithic Grooved Ware pottery (3000–2500BC). There were also flint artefacts, including scrapers

uncovered two features which contained significant amounts of Neolithic artefacts, animal remains and charcoal, as well as separate deposits of charcoal with burnt flints preserved beneath later-prehistoric soil-wash.

Other finds in the area are less certainly of the same age as the Marlborough Mount. During an evaluation in 2004 ahead of the construction of St John's secondary school, two shallow ditches containing flint debris of Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age character were recorded; it was suggested they may have defined a trackway leading off the hill.

More controversially, a large ditch briefly revealed when Marlborough College built a new swimming pool in 1999 could also be Neolithic, and a pointer to what might yet lie undiscovered. Archaeologists found large quantities of medieval pottery during an evaluation excavation. Though it was all unstratified, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, the county archaeologist, presciently recommended a watching brief when the pool works began. Michael Heaton and Bill Moffat then recorded a v-shaped ditch 7m wide and 4m deep, which had been recut and filled with

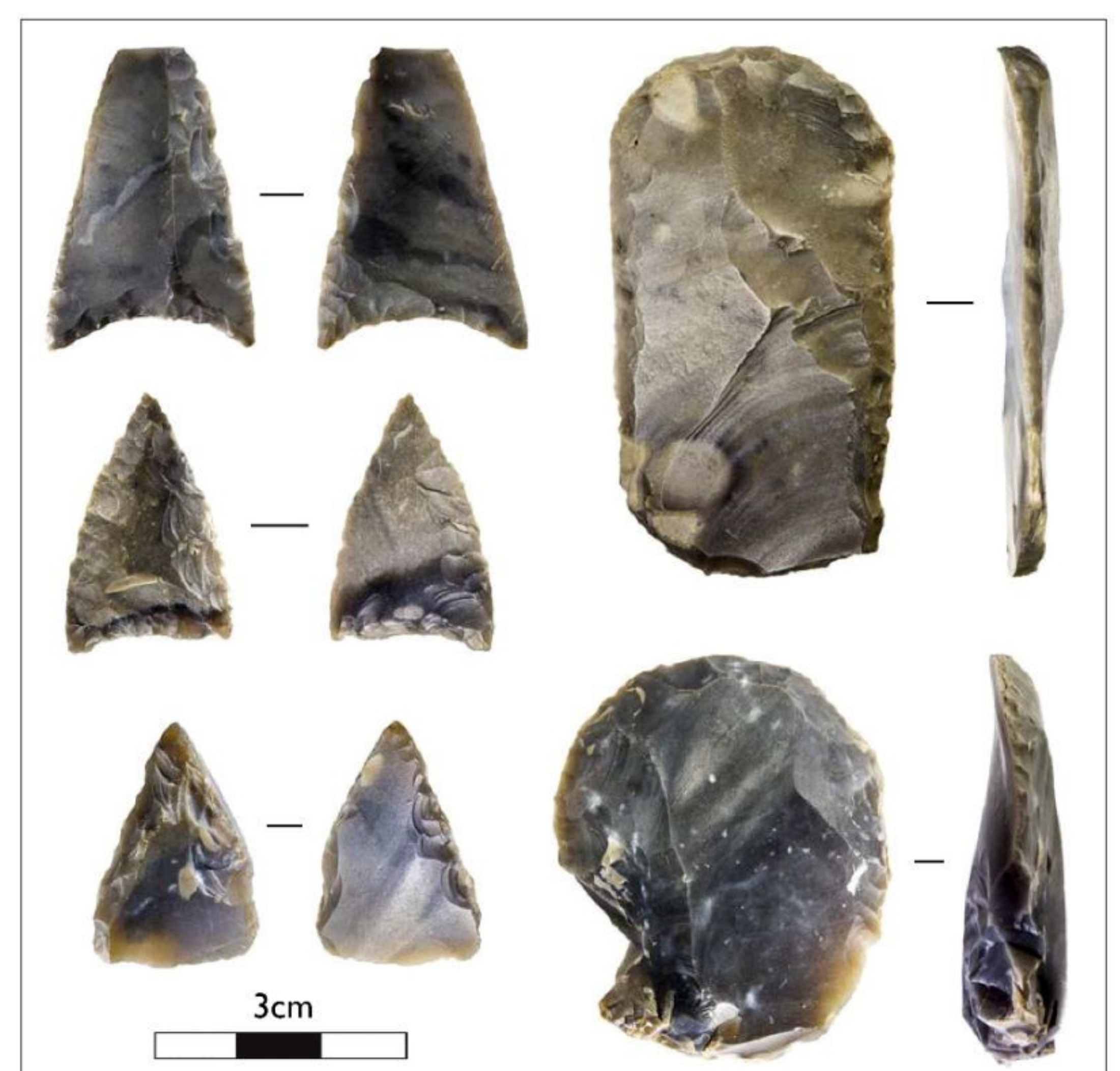
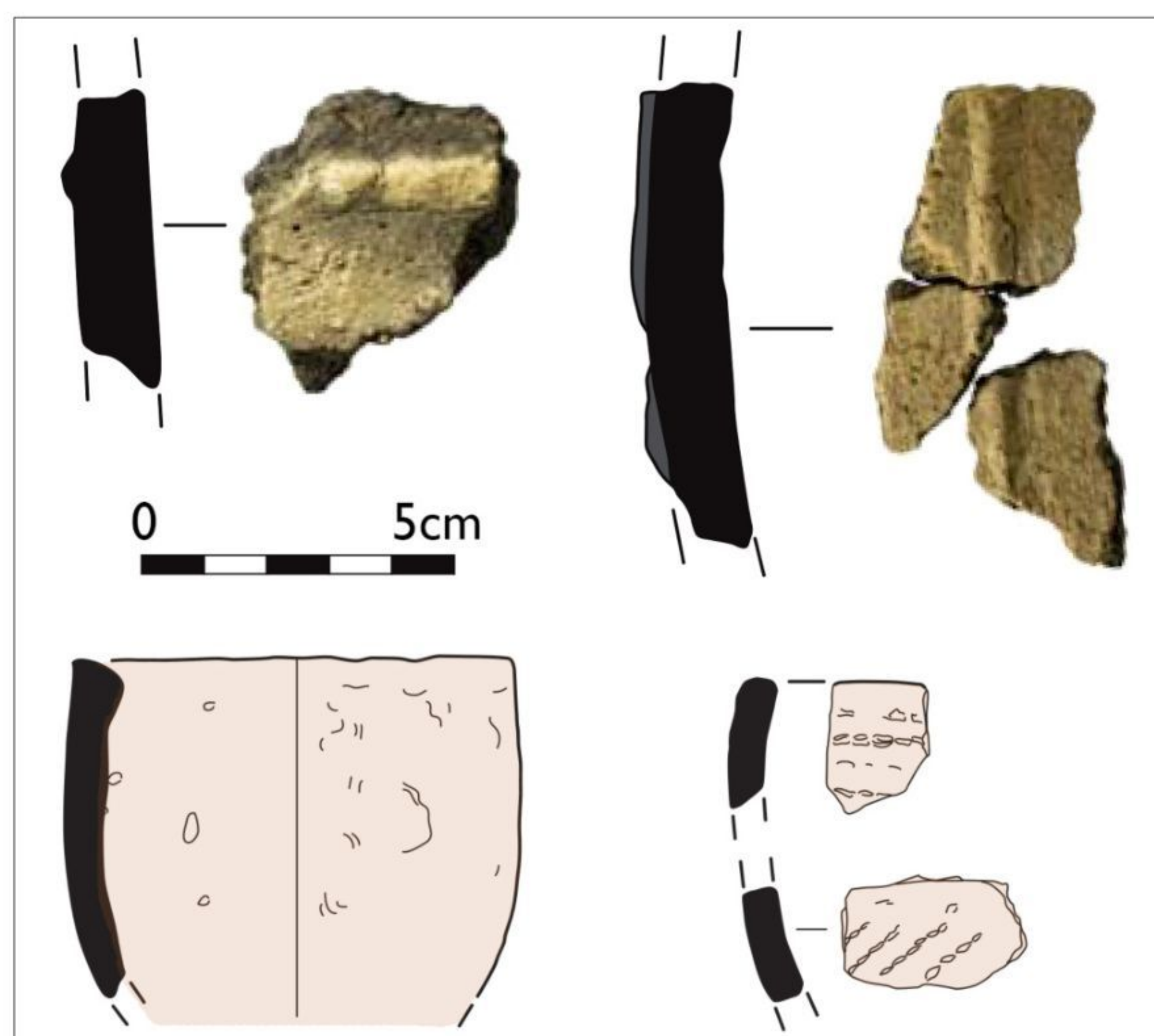
M PITTS/CBA



**Above: The Marlborough Mount rises above the River Kennet surrounded by chalk hills**

**Below and right: Late Neolithic artefacts from evaluation excavation at St Mary's School**

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY (3)



originally have been a smaller version of Silbury Hill, which towers over the source of the Kennet 10km to the west as part of the great Neolithic complex at Avebury. In 2010 Silbury Hill was radiocarbon dated to around 2450–2300BC (feature Jan/Feb 2011/116). The Marlborough mound was cored, and

and distinctive "transverse" arrowheads, and two fragments of stone axe blades.

More Grooved Ware pottery was found a little to the south, in a series of larger evaluations ahead of a new housing estate besides Salisbury Road. Work by Wessex Archaeology in 2012 and Oxford Archaeology in 2017

debris on at least three occasions. They recovered important groups of 13th-century pottery.

At the time the ditch was interpreted as marking the outer bailey or enclosure around the castle. While possible, there is little historical or topographic evidence to support the presence of





**Above: Part of an enclosure on Pantawick hill still survives as a standing earthwork**



**Above: A large earthwork at the Bury, Bishopstrow, Wiltshire, could be a henge enclosure**

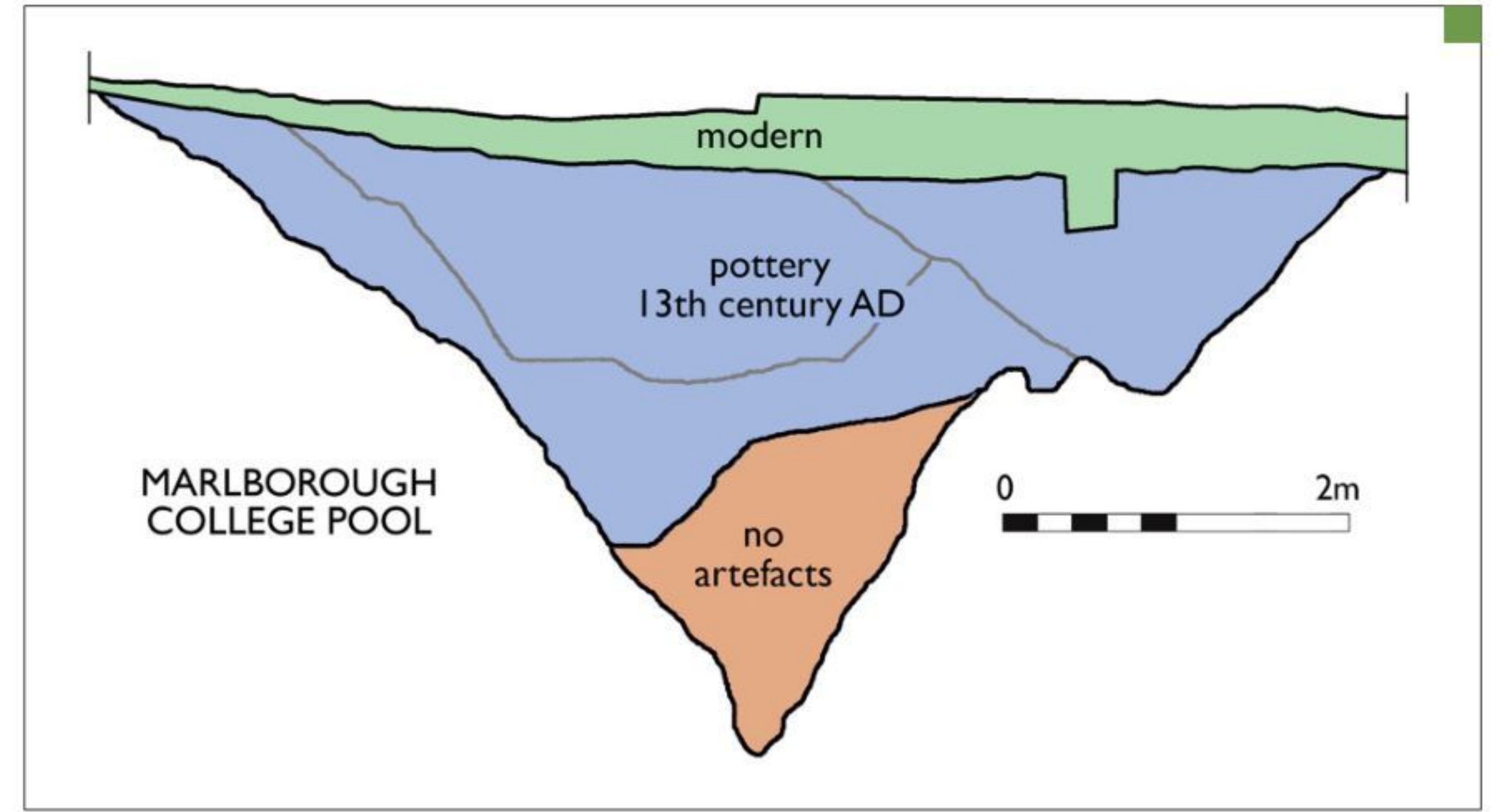
such a bailey at the site. No dated remains were found in the deepest fill, and it is conceivable that the substantial ditch was dug in prehistoric times and, like the mound, reused in the middle ages.

At Pantawick, on higher ground south of the river, is another site that could turn out to be prehistoric. It was photographed from the air early in the last century, when it showed as an incomplete oval circuit 850m across outlined by hedges, soilmarks and slight banks; it has been suggested that it might be Roman or medieval. The site has not been investigated, however, and one possibility is that its origins lie in an Early Neolithic hilltop enclosure (4000–3000BC). Many prehistoric flint artefacts have been collected from the hill over the past century; Grahame

Clark, who became one of the UK's most eminent 20th-century archaeologists, identified what he called "flint-working areas" there when he was a pupil at Marlborough College.

The great Wessex Late Neolithic ceremonial centres are well known today, but they became so only after excavations by Geoffrey Wainwright in the 1960s and 70s; before then the age and identity of Avebury alone were certain. It is not impossible that monument complexes on a similar scale are still to be discovered.

Waulud's Bank, a large earthwork in Bedfordshire, is known to be Neolithic from small excavations in the last century, but has yet to be fully investigated. David Field and David McComish have recently suggested that a massive enclosure known as the Bury,

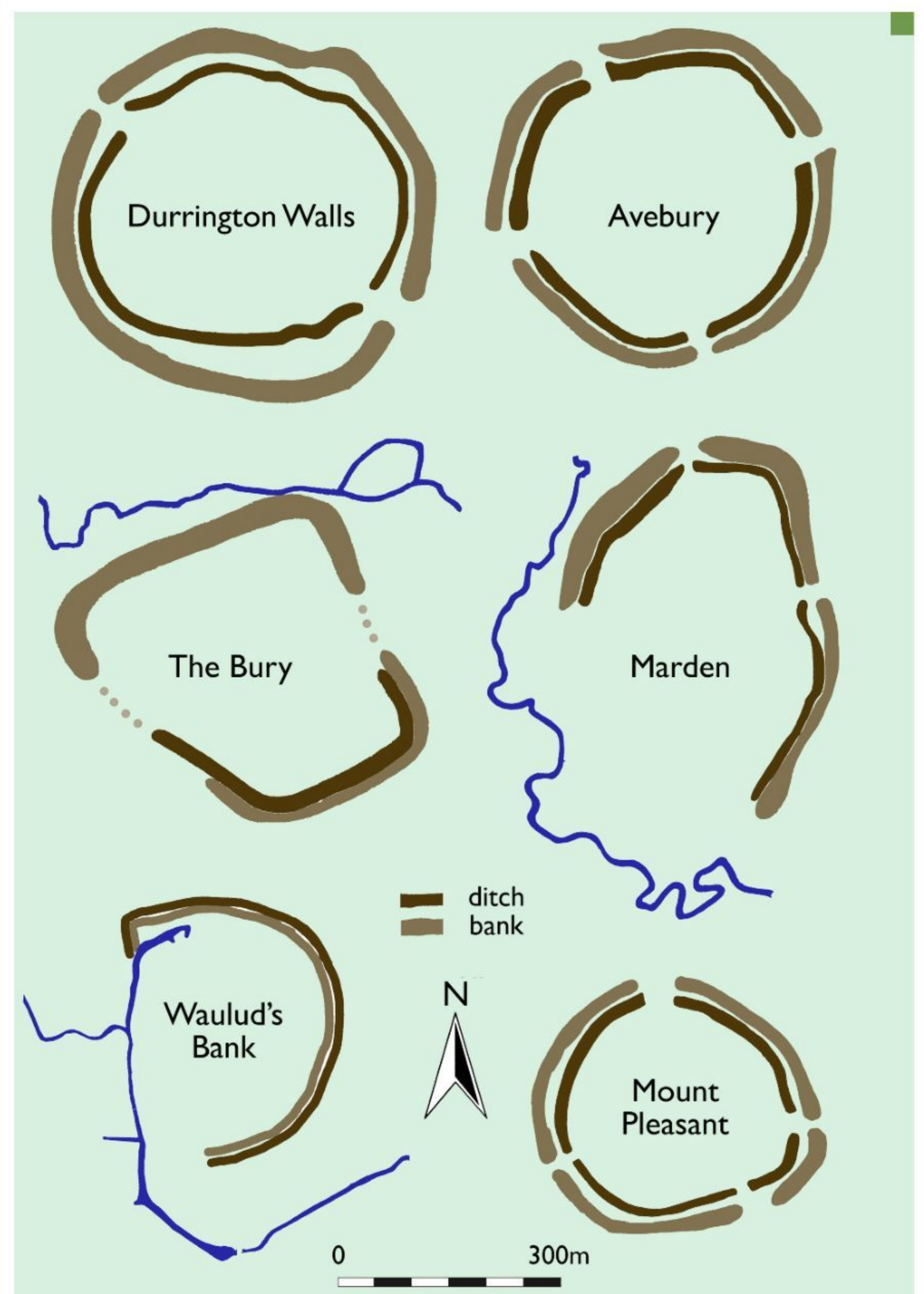


at Bishopstrow near Warminster, is not as has been suggested a Roman signal station or a medieval deer park, but Wiltshire's fourth henge enclosure; it has an internal ditch. On a smaller scale, Stewart Ainsworth has described what looks like a circular henge about 75m across near Low Broadwood Hall, Allendale in Northumberland.

Marlborough began as an Anglo-Saxon town. It would be no surprise if substantial prehistoric earthworks had been flattened over the centuries. Archaeological research has mostly been development led, with small trenches sampling large areas. The great Neolithic mound, as Leary said, is unlikely to have stood alone. ■

**Above: Simplified section of a ditch on the site of Marlborough College pool; could it be Neolithic in origin?**

**Below: Fifty years ago only one of these was confirmed a Neolithic henge, Avebury in Wiltshire; excavations at Durrington and Marden, Wiltshire, and Mount Pleasant, Dorset, proved those sites; Waulud's Bank, Bedfordshire, is Neolithic but has not been researched; that the Bury is a henge was first suggested in 2016**





# Britain in archaeology

A three-week evaluation dig at the hillfort of Dinas Dinlle in Gwynedd, north-west Wales, has revealed a well-preserved **stone roundhouse** that was rapidly covered under tonnes of sand during ancient storm activity. The excavation took place because storms are affecting the site today, eroding the coastal cliff – 20–40m of the fort has been lost since 1900.

Up to 1.5m of sand buried well-faced walls at least 1.5m high (the bottom was not reached) and over 2.4m thick. At 13m across, a monumental roundhouse a few metres from the cliff edge is one of the largest ever seen in Wales. A few Roman pottery sherds were found, and the Aberystwyth Luminescence



Research Laboratory has taken sand samples hoping to determine the house's age and burial history.

Excavation at Dinas Dinlle, mentioned in the medieval Mabinogion and now owned by the National Trust, was managed by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust for the EU-funded Cherish Project (2017–21), which is examining climate change and coastal heritage in Wales and Ireland. Fifty local community volunteers took part.



Scientists have identified **Cornish tin** in ingots found at Late Bronze Age wreck sites in the eastern Mediterranean. Isotopes and trace elements narrowed down potential sources. The radiogenic composition of lead excluded Anatolian, central Asian and Egyptian tin ores. Tin isotopes and trace elements excluded many continental European sources, leaving Cornwall as the most likely supplier for 13th–12th century tin ingots from Israel. “The findings are of great importance for the archaeological interpretation of the trade routes and the circulation of tin,” write the scientists in *PLOS ONE* (June).

and it is likely that no one in Europe then could have eaten raw milk. The research is published in *Archaeological & Anthropological Sciences* (September).

Study of an exceptional prehistoric burial excavated in 2016 on Knowle Hill Farm, Dorset, has identified a **deep incision** on the left femur, indicative of a stabbing blow to the back of the thigh which would have led to heavy bleeding and rapid death. A 25-year-old man had been buried in a wooden chamber with an exceptional European Beaker, a stone wristguard, two barbed-and-tanged flint arrowheads and a fire-lighting kit (Britain in archaeology Nov/Dec 2016/151). Scattered bones and broken artefacts suggest the grave had been desecrated, write archaeologists in *Past* 92 (summer). Research continues using 3D microscopy, isotope studies and aDNA.



The rare remains of a **Pictish individual** have been excavated near Muir of Ord on the Black Isle, in the Pictish province of Fortriu. Excavation by the North of Scotland Archaeological Society recorded the outlines of barrows in one of Scotland's largest Pictish cemeteries, which had been identified from aerial photos. Soil acidity meant no bones survived, but on the last day of the dig “the ghostly outlines of a skeleton” emerged in the form of black staining. The grave is thought to be some 1,400 years old.



Musket and pistol balls, horse harness fittings and belt buckles have been found on the site of the **Battle of Worcester**, the last encounter of the Civil War (1651), which sent Charles II into exile. During major road and flood compensation works by Worcestershire County Council at Powick, archaeologists found the artefacts just outside the registered battlefield in a river valley beneath flood silts, using optically stimulated luminescence to identify the Civil War horizon.

Evidence for **Neolithic milk** has been found on the teeth of seven people whose remains were excavated in southern England. Scientists identified milk protein  $\beta$ -lactoglobulin in dental calculus derived from cattle, sheep or goat milk, the earliest direct evidence for dairy consumption in Britain. At least some of the people at Hambledon Hill (Dorset), Hazleton North (Gloucestershire) and Banbury Lane (Northampton) were consuming milk products such as cheese or yogurt in the Early Neolithic (4000–3000BC): ancient DNA at Banbury Lane reveals no lactase persistence,



A spectacular **Pictish stone** has been found in a churchyard in Dingwall, Easter Ross. Now 1.5m long, it may originally have stood up to 2.4m high. John Borland, measured survey manager with Historic Environment Scotland and president of the Pictish Arts Society, said the discovery “of the top half of a large cross slab with Pictish symbols is of national importance”.

The designs include mythical beasts, oxen, an animal-headed warrior with sword and shield, and a double-disc and z-rod symbol. At the time of writing carvings on the back have not been described, but are likely to include a large ornate



Christian cross. Such elaborate artwork is characteristic of the later phases of symbol stones in the eighth or ninth centuries AD (feature Jul/Aug 2019/167).

The stone had been reused as a grave marker in 1796, and was recognised by Anne MacInnes of the North of Scotland Archaeological Society when clearing vegetation during a survey of the church site. It was removed and will be conserved with a view to permanent display at a suitable venue.



Excavation at Hay Castle, Haye-on-Wye, has uncovered a **large stone ball** thought to have been launched at the site by a trebuchet or catapult during a medieval siege. The rough-hewn ball, weighing 28.5kg, was found in the east wing of the site’s 17th-century-mansion during a major restoration programme by the Hay Castle Trust, which plans to open an arts and education centre there in 2020. Hay Castle suffered various sieges in the 13th century; archaeologist Chris Cape said the stone may date from the Second Barons’ War of 1263–66.

The Church of Scotland has lodged a case at the Court of Session against a metal detectorist, claiming a **share of a £2m award** for the discovery of a Viking-age treasure in Galloway. In 2014 Derek McLennan, with two minister friends, found Viking silver in a field owned by the Church and informed the Treasure Trove Unit.

Archaeologists mounted an excavation and found evidence that the hoard had been buried in the corner of a building (feature Jan/Feb 2015/140). The Church is claiming part of the award paid by the National Museum of Scotland.



After a year on site, 70 archaeologists from MOLA Headland Infrastructure have completed the excavation of **6,500**

**groups of human remains** in Birmingham where the HS2 Curzon Street station is now being built. The burial ground at Park Street opened in 1810 as an overflow cemetery, and closed to public burials in 1873. Grave goods include a bone-handled knife, a figurine and dinner plates. The population sample will offer insights into 19th-century lifestyles and burial rituals, and will be compared to another large contemporary sample from St James’s Gardens in London (feature May/Jun 2019/166).



Rarely seen **guard chambers** have been identified at the first excavation at Nesscliffe hillfort, Shropshire. The chambers were on either side of a passage at the north-east entrance. An inner rampart was found to be 8m wide with stone revetment fronting stone and sand. The fort may have begun around 500BC, and test pits revealed an occupation layer with second-century Roman pottery. Archaeologists from Southampton and Oxford universities will return to the site next year. Nesscliffe may have been “a highly strategic point,” said Gary Lock. “It would have been seen from miles around and would have given a great viewpoint for those inside.” ■



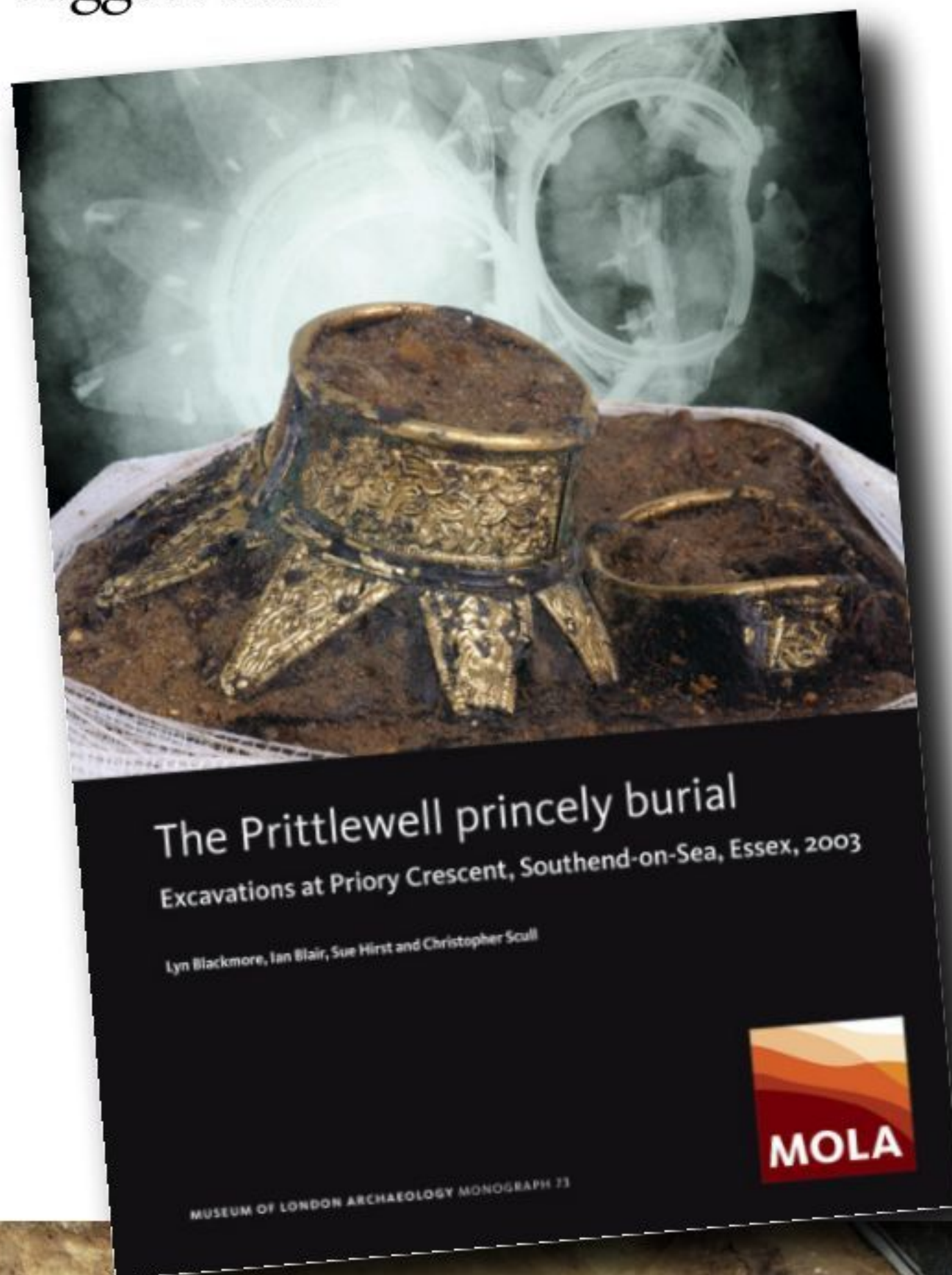


## Improve information flows

I enjoyed your interview with John Blair (My archaeology Sep/Oct 2019/168) in which he discussed his research synthesising the results of developer-funded investigations of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, many recorded only within the body of so-called grey literature. John's work is one of an increasing number of important university-led synthetic projects (for example see Richard Bradley and colleagues on the later prehistory of north-west Europe [Books Sep/Oct 2016/150], and Michael Fulford et al on rural Roman Britain [feature Sep/Oct 2013/132]) which are delivering major increases in our understanding, and reaffirming the public value of development-led archaeology in the UK.

John expresses concern about the state of local authority archaeology as a result of continuing cuts in public expenditure. While in no way disagreeing with his views on the seriousness of the challenges, I would suggest that

*Few excavations are as spectacular as that of the Prittlewell prince, lavishly published by MOLA (see feature Jul/Aug 2019/167); but results from thousands of routine excavations described only in "grey literature" are crucial for writing the UK's ancient history*



archaeologists must move beyond hand-wringing to actively respond to a funding situation which will not be reversed in the foreseeable future.

One important contribution will be to improve the flows of information to – and between – local authority historic environment records, so that academic

archaeologists no longer have to play time-and-money-consuming "hunt the thimble" with grey literature in order to construct the big picture. Fortunately the further development of OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS) through the HERALD project (Historic Environment Research Archives, Links & Data), supported by Historic England, provides such a mechanism.

All archaeological practices must now take responsibility for ensuring that no investigation takes place without such records being generated, with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists reinforcing this requirement through its standards and guidance. The best operators already do this: the rest must now follow suit. Ideally amateur archaeologists will also adopt this approach, and it was heartening to read Lesley Feakes' letter, in the same issue of British Archaeology, making just that connection.

*Steve Trow, Southampton*

## Looking for Marlowe

Is it feasible to propose the use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) to at last uncover the remains of the playwright and poet Christopher Marlowe from somewhere in the cold depths of the grounds of St Nicholas' Church in Deptford? Given the success of this technology in the 2012 discovery of the remains of Richard III it is perhaps not unreasonable to believe that it could be as equally successful in the discovery of Marlowe's resting place. There would be, one can assume, objections to be overcome – but surely the reinterment to Westminster Abbey of this historically significant figure is deserving of such determination and effort...?

Brilliant magazine by the way.  
*Maurice Cloud, Aurora, Colorado, USA*

*• GPR played no role in the discovery of Richard III's remains, and the problem in Deptford would not be finding a grave but knowing which of many had been dug for Marlowe. Can anyone suggest how his remains might be distinguished? Ed*

## Radiocarbon dating

I have found your series on the history of radiocarbon dating fascinating (features Nov/Dec 2018/163, Sep/Oct 2019/168). I see that in your note on the subject in each issue you recommend the relevant Wikipedia article. You

may be interested to know that this has been converted into a peer-reviewed article by the main author, Mike Christie, in the *WikiJournal of Science* at [https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/WikiJournal\\_of\\_Science/Radiocarbon\\_dating](https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/WikiJournal_of_Science/Radiocarbon_dating)  
*Dudley Miles, London*

## Did disease kill hunters?

I've recently started subscribing to your magazine and have very much enjoyed my first two copies. The last edition had a very



interesting article on ancient human DNA (feature Sep/Oct 2019/168). It showed that Mesolithic people in Britain contributed little aDNA to Neolithic people, particularly in England and Wales. The article said this could most easily be explained by growing disparities in population sizes. Yet this idea alone doesn't explain why the Mesolithic contribution was greater on the continent. It suggests this Mesolithic content could have been even less – disparities in growth rates began earlier abroad.

Farmers probably acquired increasing immunity to the new diseases from domesticated animals before they reached Britain. It seems there was a 1,000-year delay before they crossed the Channel. This could have further tipped the balance against native Britons at a time when conflict with the newcomers is to be expected. Perhaps Mesolithic survivors fared better in Scotland where there could have been fewer invading farmers.

It is intriguing that a considerably reduced genetic contribution also seems to have been made by Neolithic people after newcomers arrived in the Bronze Age. The arrival in historic times of newcomers to places such as the Americas and Australia produced similar results. So while a gradual decline in the proportion of Mesolithic people may be the easiest explanation, a grimmer one seems more plausible.

*Andrew Smith, Church Stretton* ■

*Write to the editor at email or postal address on page 3. Letters may be shortened*





**Access to Tarr Steps**  
(ss 868321, TA22 9PY)  
is via narrow lanes  
off the B3223 at  
Winsford Hill north  
of Dulverton. There  
is a public carpark  
between the hamlet  
of Liscombe and  
the river



## Mick Sharp remembers a distinctive bridge that is less ancient and less permanent than it looks **The floating stones of Tarr Steps**

The Tarr Steps, beside a ford crossing the River Barle in the Exmoor National Park, Somerset, certainly look and feel prehistoric; they are said to have been erected by the Devil himself in order to win a bet. The idea of wooden planks or stone slabs laid over streams bank to bank, across rocks and stepping stones or raised on drystone piers, is ancient, but “clapper bridges” – the name may derive from an Anglo-Saxon word *cleaca* meaning “bridging the stepping stones” – are notoriously hard to date. They are found in many upland areas of Britain with suitable local stone such as slate, schist or granite: hotspots include Cornwall and Devon, especially on Dartmoor. There is a particularly good 13th- or 14th-century example crossing the East Dart River at Postbridge, thought to have been built for packhorses carrying tin to Tavistock. Bellever clapper bridge on the same river is less well preserved, but still impressive, and evocative of another time and culture.

Despite its look and a belief in its prehistoric origins, Tarr Steps footbridge is listed as a grade I medieval structure, and it is likely that most surviving clapper bridges are medieval or later. The raised walkway stretching for over 50m is made up of 23 large flat slabs each weighing up to two tonnes. They are supported by rubble piers with raked stones placed alongside like tilted dominoes to increase stability and act as cutstones, breaking the river’s force and deflecting debris.

This photograph was taken on a crisp, sunny morning in October 1987, after heavy rain had raised the river’s level and flow. Floods in 1952 swept the bridge away, but the slabs had been numbered during the 1949 survey which allowed them to be set back in place. Just before Christmas 2012, more than half of the clapper stones were again hurled aside by an angry River Barle (News Mar/Apr



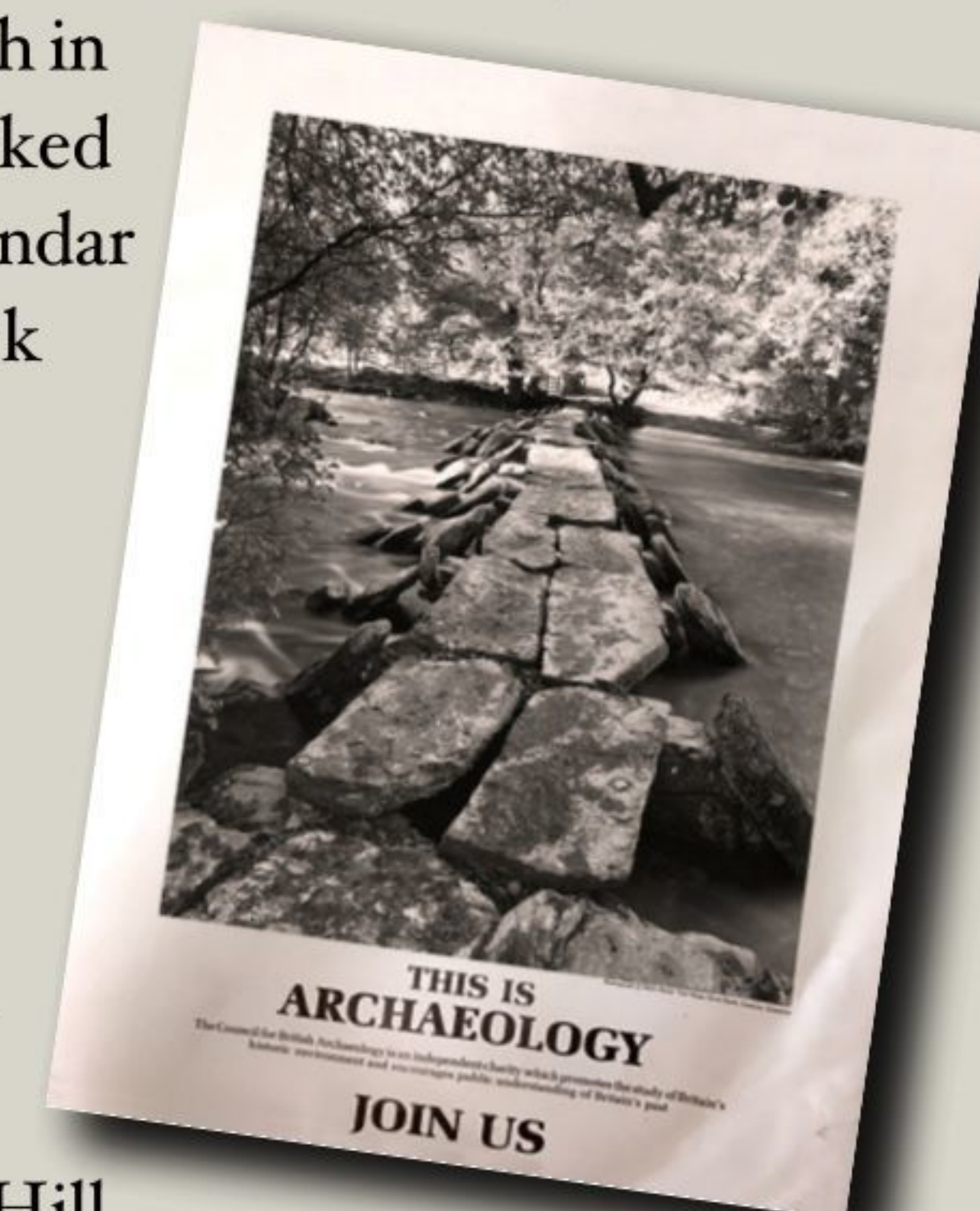
MICK SHARP

2013/129). Somerset County Council spent £10,000 repairing the bridge in February 2013 only for it to be slightly damaged later that same year, and then again, more seriously, by floodwater on November 21 2016 – a vivid indication that these rainfall events are becoming less “exceptional”.

In 1797 the poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge awoke from an opium-induced dream with the epic poem *Kubla Kahn. Or, a Vision in a Dream: A Fragment* fully formed in his mind. He was staying at Ash Farm at the top of Porlock Hill some 13km north of Tarr Steps. He wrote feverishly until he was detained “for above an hour” by “a person on business from Porlock...” The fine details “passed away like the images

on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast...”

The Council for British Archaeology is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. The 50th in 1994 was marked by a 1995 calendar using my black and white photos. Two years earlier, a pair of large posters featured my views of Tarr Steps and Minninglow Hill, Derbyshire. They carried the message: “This is Archaeology, Join Us.” ■





On the eve of the publication of the Staffordshire Hoard monograph, the fruit of a major research project, Chris Fern reflects on six years spent working with this most exceptional find

## An intimate art of complexity and genius

I heard about the Staffordshire Hoard on the news. I was astounded and amazed just like everyone else, it was exactly the sort of stuff I'd been looking at and thinking about for years: Anglo-Saxon animal art has been a bit of a passion of mine since my student days. I didn't at that point have any involvement in it, I was very jealous of Kevin Leahy!

Kevin did a tremendous job with the catalogue and his initial appraisal – much of what he said then still makes sense now. There has been a fundamental change in the quantifications. They had about 3,000 fragments back then. After more were found during conservation, we've now got about 4,600. But rather than just fragments, now we're dealing with objects that have been put back together, and sets of objects as well: we can identify pommels that go with hilt collars and grips of swords, so we can start to see sword styles. A lot changed during the research and analysis.

I did archaeology at Nottingham University in the late 1990s, and I was studying a course on the Anglo-Saxons under Lloyd Laing. One of the lectures was about Anglo-Saxon ornament. I was intrigued by a fantastic study by George Speake [*Anglo-Saxon Animal Art & its Germanic Background*, 1980], a big component of which is his catalogue of drawings which explained the animals. I was just fascinated by the potential meaning of these creatures. They are predominantly zoomorphs – you can't identify species because they are so abstract – but some can be specific such as boars and serpents, and you can try and guess at wolves and horses.

After Nottingham I did a master's degree at York University, where I met Martin Carver and Tania Dickinson. I started working for an archaeological unit, but what I really wanted to do was write about this Anglo-Saxon stuff, so I kept in contact with Martin and Tania. Martin was kind enough to let me co-write a chapter of the Sutton



Hoo report with him. I did some studies of my own off the back of that, and I started a PhD on animal art, but I didn't get very far with that. My wife was doing a PhD at the same time, it just wasn't working (she's now teaching).

I picked up work to do with Anglo-Saxon burials, and that carried me through to 2005, when I went freelance as an archaeologist and did a mixture of excavation work and further academic projects. And then I got a call from Hilary Cool.

In 2010 there was a shift in the hoard project, and English Heritage appointed Barbican Research Associates to manage the catalogue and publication of the research. Hilary called around to find people who had the expertise and the time to do it, and I was brought in to check the records and lead the typology and research team. I was responsible for the catalogue, and I became one of the academic editors of the final volume.

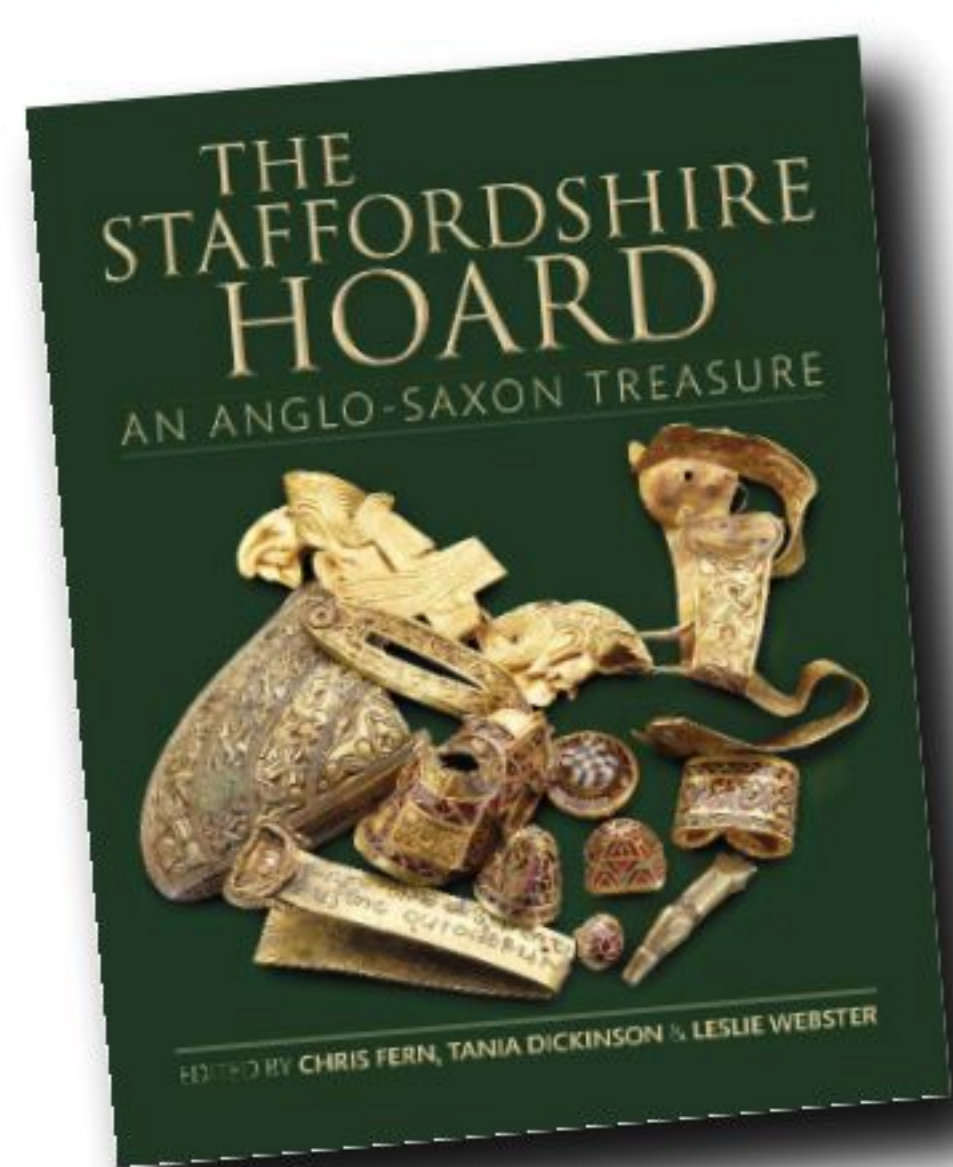
It's probably no exaggeration to state that no other find captures so well the essence of the early seventh century as we meet it in Bede's history. The Staffordshire Hoard is real testament to the wars fought across middle Britain, decided by relatively small armies that were commanded by men who wielded such swords as we have evidence for in

the hoard. Their decoration points to a golden age of artistic achievement. We see it also on the church equipment, showing that the new Christian religion played a key role too as the spiritual armoury of the emergent kingdoms, just as Bede tells us it did. Together with the helmet "fit for a king" and some of the princely weapon fittings, we may perhaps glimpse the kings named in the history, including those that fell with their warrior sub-commanders, even if nothing can be attributed absolutely. Ultimately, the hoard offers us a tantalising exemplar of what happened to their arms and armour!

And yet the art is fundamentally intimate. I am fascinated by the little creatures hidden in the intricate patterns: without the eye of knowledge you can't see them, they just look like interlace. Their ambiguity is their strength. The craftsmen understood the grammar that underpinned the art. But there's no point if it didn't have a wider currency, and part of the fantastic nature of the art is that you have to engage with it to appreciate it. It's a puzzle, these are riddles in art related to the later Anglo-Saxon fascination with riddles in poetry. Figuring it out, you get a positive mental response, like doing puzzles today. It's enjoyable, and if the art is tied in with sacred beliefs or motifs for wider narratives – such as two fighting horses on a pommel that make you think about the founding figures of Anglo-Saxon England, Hengist and Horsa – it works on more than a purely mundane level.

The complexity and genius of the art is to a large extent under-appreciated, it has yet to be written about. I guess my life's work has really been dedicated to try and uncover as much of that as possible – trying to understand what people believed and felt, and were willing to die for in the period before Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England.

Interview Mike Pitts ■



**The Staffordshire Hoard: An Anglo-Saxon Treasure, edited by Chris Fern, Tania Dickinson & Leslie Webster, is due to be launched on November 1**



# Greg Bailey on broadcasting



“Summer 1939,” said art-historian Janina Ramirez. “A golden age of exploration and archaeology is coming to an end.” The title of the three-part series she was introducing, *Raiders of the Lost Past* (Alley Cat Productions for BBC4, Sep 2019), had put me on my guard. And as a punster from the golden age of TV title word-play myself, I always maintained that this dubious art should elucidate something of a programme’s content and purpose as well as amuse.

“It was an era”, Ramirez continued enthusiastically, “that saw adventurers set out to explore the remotest corners of the globe in search of clues to unlock our ancient past.” The clichés were yet to lift my spirits. Nevertheless, I understood that a production office



may favour hyperbole in an age of intensely competitive media. And once the first show of the series, *The Sutton Hoo Hoard*, settled down and told its story, it proved very rewarding.

Viewers saw archive film and photography of the ship burial being excavated. We were, of course, shown gold jewellery and ingots, and Ramirez, in her element, pored over tiny gold and garnet pyramids, the first of the wonderful Anglo-Saxon treasures to be uncovered. In a woodland setting the popular presenter fondled a replica of probably the most famous Sutton Hoo treasure of all, the ornate iron helmet of a great seventh-century warlord. And the film skilfully wove extracts from the meticulous diaries of farm-hand turned citizen archaeologist Basil Brown with historic first-person accounts and contemporary commentary.

“I remember very well coming back to the pub in the evening”, recalled Stuart Piggott in a vintage film-clip, “and having the usual question, ‘Well old boy, have you found any gold today?’” “Yes,” the famous archaeologist replied, “My pockets are absolutely full. As I spoke I was holding the box containing the great gold belt buckle in my rather sweaty hands in the pocket of my coat.”

Meanwhile the remarkably generous land-owner Mrs Edith Pretty, the “Colonel’s widow” who wisely chose her employee Brown to excavate the site and who was to donate the whole hoard to the nation, was to be seen at a picnic with friends overlooking progress. We heard archive testimony from Charles Phillips, the professional from Cambridge University who took over as lead archaeologist when the importance of the burial chamber was finally recognised, but who nonetheless praised his amateur predecessor Brown, who “had a real flair for finding things”.

Martin Carver’s retrospective evaluation of the Sutton Hoo excavation was more generous. “They excavated that chamber expeditiously, I think it’s fair to say, but with great care and a lot of talent. You couldn’t have got a better group in many ways. They took out 363 finds from the chamber, it took them ten days. If we did it now it would take us ten months... It was kind of heroic and war was coming. They weren’t really well-equipped. But they somehow managed it.”

The war, of course, did come and the Sutton Hoo treasures returned underground to a tube tunnel at Aldwych. Pretty, who declined a CBE from Winston Churchill, would never live to see her legacy to the nation on public display. Mrs Brown wrote a personal tribute to her husband’s employer: “I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your great kindness in giving my dear husband this work to do. I know how delighted he is, and it is the work he loves.”

*Greg Bailey researches TV archaeology in the Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Bristol ■*

## Phase 2

Earlier this year we published a major feature about Reading Abbey (Jul/Aug/167), where the Ministry of Justice has conducted evaluation excavations ahead of the sale of the old Reading Prison. David Harrison noted that the MoJ had declined to release information about the archaeological works on grounds that this might compromise the public interest of getting the best price for the land. Harrison now says that in response to a further Freedom of Information Request, he has been told that releasing the archaeological report would “risk ... the protection of the environment”. The commissioner, while recognising that “the information is not on emissions”, said that “disclosure of the withheld information would endanger the land in question”. A report on the digs was due to Historic England within two months of completion in May 2018.

We pictured a gnarled old tree in our second radiocarbon feature (Sep/Oct 2019/168), described as “Methuselah, the oldest confirmed organism on Earth, a bristlecone pine tree in the White Mountains, California.” It was a bristlecone pine, but unfortunately, writes Paula Gardiner, not Methuselah. Now a research fellow in the Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Bristol, she was an intern in the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, University of Arizona, in 2000 and worked on the Bristlecone Pine Project with the late Tom Harlan in 2001, coring trees in the area of Methuselah Walk. Methuselah’s exact location is now “kept a tight secret,” adds Gardiner, “as visitors to the area were too fond of breaking off pieces”.

Scapa Flow, where Germany’s

surface fleet was scuttled after the end of the First World War, is (as every archaeologist knows) in Orkney not Shetland (Britain in archaeology

Sep/Oct 2019/168). ■







# The Chew Valley Hoard

In January metal detectorists found an exceptional hoard of early medieval coins. Ahead of its full study, Gareth Williams describes its historical interest

Metal detectorists have discovered a large hoard of coins of Harold II and William I in the Chew Valley area of Bath & North East Somerset. The hoard had been partially dispersed in the plough soil. The finders immediately reported the discovery as potential Treasure via the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and continued to excavate the site. There was no trace of any container, but there were a number of individual clumps of coins which might have revealed something about the hoard's internal layout. However, these were quickly dispersed, and that information lost. As yet there has been no wider archaeological investigation of the







find spot, although it is hoped that this may take place in the future.

The bulk of the hoard was quickly brought to the British Museum (BM) for conservation and identification through the Treasure process. The finders continued to investigate the site until they were satisfied that no further coins remained, and a second smaller parcel of coins was delivered to the BM while conservation of the main group was still ongoing. As is usual with Treasure cases, our aim was to clean the hoard well enough to permit identification, and full conservation will only be completed if and when a museum acquires the hoard. However, the coins' high silver content combined with soil conditions mean that the majority of the coins were well preserved, although a small number

**Above: Coins arrive at the British Museum in the finders' bags**

**Right: Conservators cleaning coins**

**Below: Detectorists Lisa Grace and Adam Staples, who found the Chew Valley Hoard with a group of friends**



were damaged in the ground, probably in the course of ploughing. In addition the hoard contained a number of cut halfpennies, while a high proportion of the coins had been deliberately bent, and many show signs of wear through circulation. As a result, the legibility of the coins is variable.

Work on the fragments continues, as in some cases it has been possible to match many pieces from individual coins. On the current count the hoard contained 2,578 coins, of which 1,236 were minted in the reign of Harold II (1066) and 1,310 in the reign of William I (1066–87), with 32 further unidentified fragments. Coins of this period routinely carry the names of the moneyers responsible for issuing them, and the towns in which they were minted. The vast majority of these can be identified, though some yet to be firmly attributed have incomplete or partially legible inscriptions.

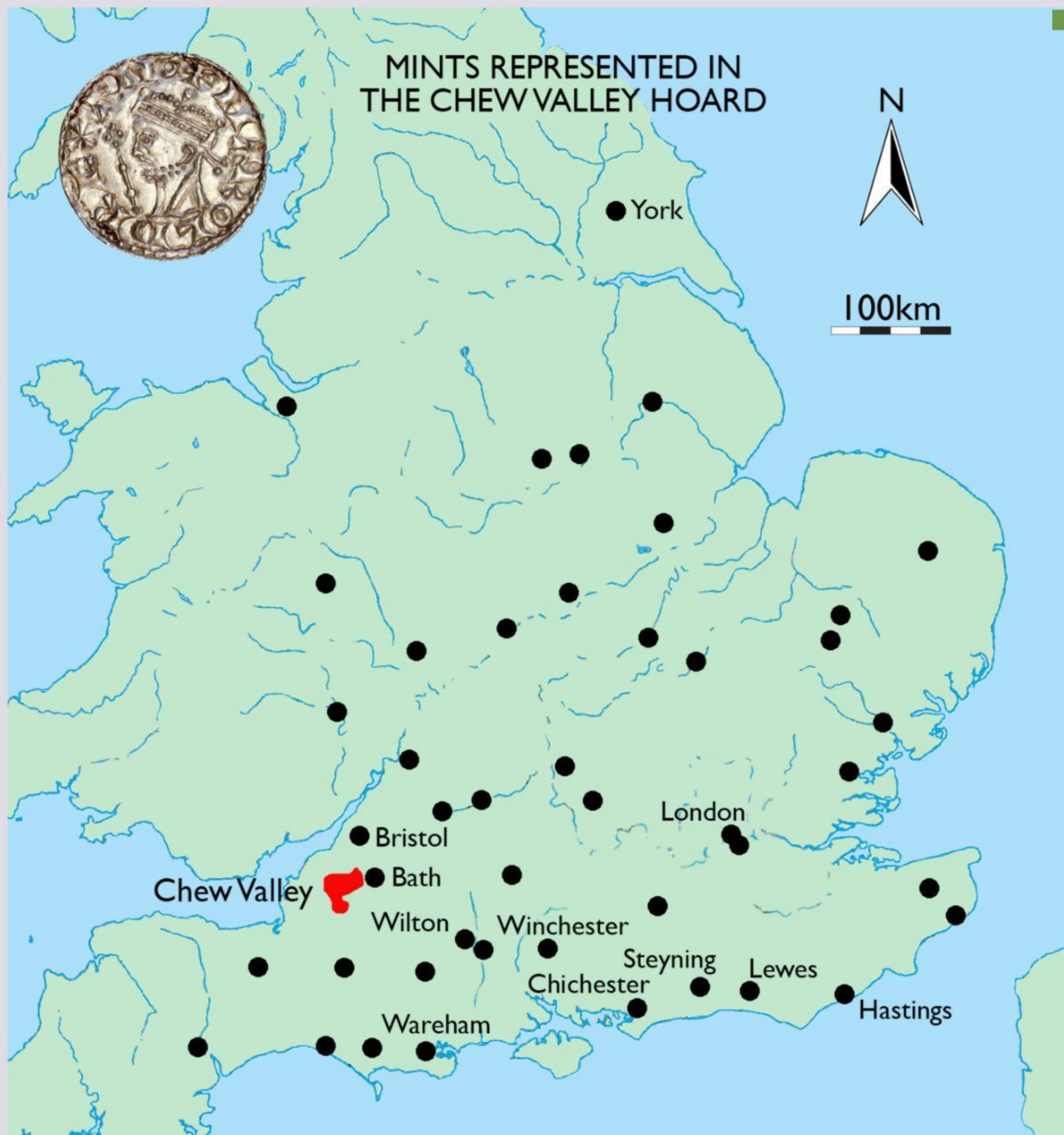
## Bath & Sussex

All of the William coins are of the so-called Profile/Cross Fleury type. This

cannot be dated absolutely, but was probably first issued shortly after his coronation on December 25 1066, and is unlikely to have circulated for more than three years at most. More detailed study of the dies represented as well as evidence of circulation may in the future enable the hoard to be dated more precisely, but preliminary examination suggests that it was probably buried around late 1067 or 1068. It is by some distance the largest hoard from the early years of William's reign, and one of the largest Norman hoards ever found: it has the potential to transform our understanding of the impact of the Norman Conquest on the English coinage. To put it in context, the hoard contains nearly five times as many of William's Profile/Cross Fleury type, and twice as many Harold coins, as the whole of the existing corpora.

A variety of information can be extracted from the coins, although definitive analysis will not be possible until the hoard has been acquired and fully documented. Nevertheless, it is already possible to draw out some





*Left: The hoard contains over 1,200 coins of Harold II (1066) and 1,300 of William I (1066–87), bearing the moneyers' names and towns of minting; 48 mints are named (three unidentified), most of which produced coins of both kings*

there were gaps in both types, and that the hoard fills some of these gaps. The most dramatic change here is at Bath, previously not recorded as a mint under Harold, but here represented by 59 coins issued by the moneyers Brungar and Osmær. Both moneyers were already recorded minting at Bath under William (and there are William Bath coins in the hoard as well), so the new discoveries show direct continuity there across the Conquest. This is representative of a wider pattern across the country which is now more apparent with a number of additional moneyers recorded in both types.

A second point of interest is the distribution of the mints within the hoard. Local minting took place within a single national coinage, and larger hoards in both Anglo-Saxon and Norman times typically contain coins from all over England. There is a tendency for local mints to be over-represented in relation to their importance as a whole, while major mints such as London, Canterbury, Winchester, Lincoln and York are also typically well represented.

It is therefore no surprise that Bath should be prominent in the hoard in both Harold and William coins; Bristol is also comparatively well represented for both kings. South-western mints generally are also well represented among the William coins, within an overall distribution including coins from all over the country, and high representation of both London and Winchester. The William parcel is thus what one might expect from a south-western hoard.

This is in stark contrast to the

preliminary points of interest.

The first of these is the presence of mint and moneyers not previously recorded for the types. Minting in the late Anglo-Saxon and early Norman period was devolved across a network of English towns, with large numbers

of small towns minting in the south, a smaller number of more dominant towns in the Midlands, and York alone minting north of the Humber.

Given the relatively small size of the existing corpus of the two main types in the hoard, it is unsurprising that

*Below: A famous scene on the Bayeux Tapestry, where in 1064 Harold Earl of Wessex swears an oath to William Duke of Normandy, assumed to be a pledge to back William as successor king of England to Edward the Confessor*

## A year of kings

Harold II (Godwinsson) was crowned the last Anglo-Saxon king of England in January 1066, after the death of Edward the Confessor. However, William I of Normandy claimed the

throne and killed Harold at the Battle of Hastings in October. Earlier in September Harold had defeated Harald of Norway, also seeking the English throne, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire





Harold coins. Apart from Bath and Bristol, south-western mints are not particularly well represented, with the exception of Wilton, which (as discussed further below) is a special case. Instead, the hoard shows a massive bias towards London and the south-east, especially Sussex. London alone accounts for around one-third of the hoard, with over 400 coins, but this is followed by the normally minor mint of Chichester with over 250, while Steyning has 96 and Lewes 22.

Harold gathered troops to protect the south coast throughout the summer of 1066, before the twin invasions in the autumn of Harald of Norway in Yorkshire and William of Normandy in Sussex. He probably also summoned reinforcements from Wessex between his successful campaign in the north and his eventual defeat near Hastings (itself represented by a small group of coins in the hoard).

Most of the hoards buried during Harold's short reign have been found in Sussex, for understandable reasons, and it seems likely that such strong elements from London and Sussex in a hoard from Harold's West Saxon heartland may well also have a connection with the political events of 1066. More work is needed on what precise connections there could have been between the Chew Valley and Sussex at this time, but it is likely that there is some connection with military service, even if it will almost certainly never be possible to establish a direct connection with the Battle of Hastings itself.

## Moneyers & mules

The mint distribution is not the only distinction between the Harold and William parcels in the hoard. The Harold coins are mostly complete pennies, and relatively few of them show signs of testing. By contrast, the William parcel contains over 60 cut halfpennies, compared with around five in the Harold parcel. In this period the silver penny was the only denomination, and smaller denominations were created by physically cutting them into halves and quarters. It is uncertain whether this practice was officially sanctioned, but it was sufficiently widespread that the authorities must at least have tolerated it. Cut halves and quarters are

**Right: Mule with Edward the Confessor on the obverse (left) and William I on the reverse (right)**



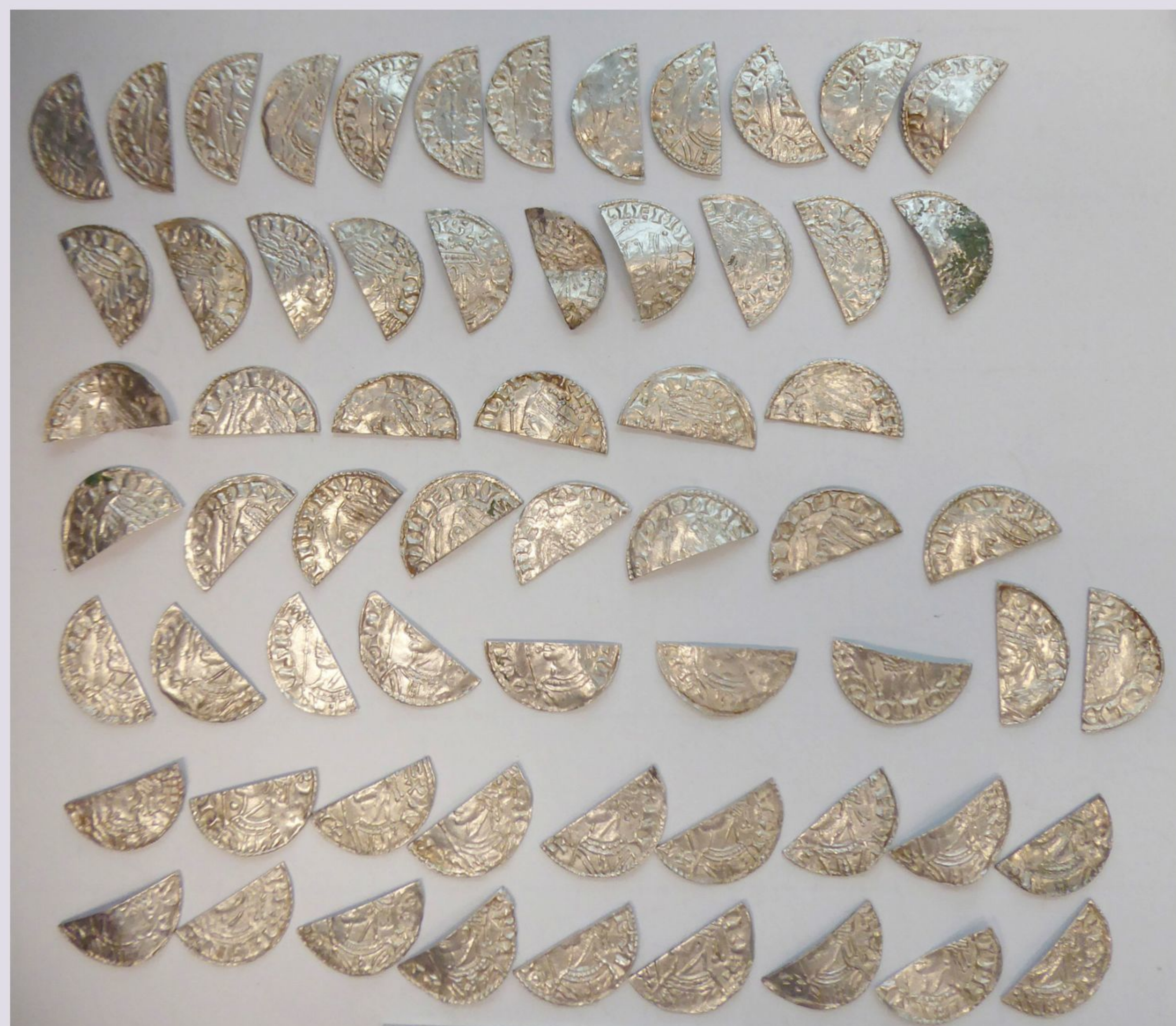
**Right: Mule of Harold II and William I, moneyer Sideman of Wareham**



**Below: Cut halfpennies; silver pennies, the only coins minted for general circulation, were often cut into halves and quarters to provide smaller denominations**

increasingly common as single finds despite their small size, suggesting that they played an important part in the circulating currency, but they rarely make up a significant proportion of savings hoards.

A high proportion of the William coins have also been bent to test the silver quality (alloying with lead would increase the moneyer's profit, but would make the coins softer), but only a small number of the Harold coins







obverses of Harold's PAX type. These are the first known mules of Harold and William, although Edward-William mules are previously recorded. Regular coins of William by Swetman and Sideman are also recorded in the hoard.

Mules between different types are rare in the late Anglo-Saxon period, but not excessively so, and probably represent the moneyer's attempt to evade the fees he had to pay for a new set of dies. With each type change, the old coins ceased to circulate legally and had to be exchanged for new ones, with a commission paid to the moneyer; foreign coins entering the country had to be exchanged in the same way. The moneyers in turn paid a fee to the king for the right to practise, and apparently also paid an additional fee for each new die. Upper and lower dies wear out at different rates, so the moneyer could avoid the fee by continuing to use the serviceable die in combination with an obsolete die of an earlier type, and hoping that nobody noticed. The risks were high, but the stylised nature of the busts and the limited literacy of the population as a whole meant that there was a good chance that no one would notice.

## Hastings aftermath

The last point of interest in the hoard is the presence of over 100 Harold pennies from the mint of Wilton, struck from a variety of dies. It has previously been noted that in the existing corpus of Harold II coins, Wilton (normally only a very small mint) is the most important after London, and struck from an unusually large number of dies, most of which appear not to have been produced by the official die-cutters. However, these coins are not distributed across the corpus as a whole, and coins from the unofficial dies are not represented in any of the hoards deposited in Harold's reign.

All the coins with recorded provenances come from a hoard found near Soberton in Hampshire around 1850, and most of the unprovenanced finds are also believed to come from this hoard, which was largely dispersed into private collections. Like the Chew Valley Hoard, it was deposited early in the reign of William. The presence of these anomalous coins only in a hoard of William's reign, and



*Above: Coins in the hoard show a heavy bias towards London and the south-east, especially Sussex, with over 250 from Chichester*

*Left: Silver penny of Harold II, Aelfwine of Chichester*



*Left: Silver penny of Harold II, moneyer Osmaer of Bath; the Bath mint was not previously recorded in Harold's coinage*

show similar treatment. The testing, the presence of so many halfpennies, the widespread distribution of mints and the evidence of significant wear on many of the William coins all point to these having been drawn from coins in general circulation at the time that the hoard was compiled. By contrast, the limited range of mints and dies in the Harold parcel, combined with more limited evidence of testing and wear, suggests that most of these coins had

seen very little circulation.

An additional point of interest in the hoard is the presence of three "mules", combining the obverse design of one coin type with the reverse of another. All three have the reverses of William's Profile/Cross Fleury type, combined with pre-Conquest obverses. One of these, issued by Swetman of London, was the final type of Edward the Confessor, while two, issued by Sideman of Wareham, used



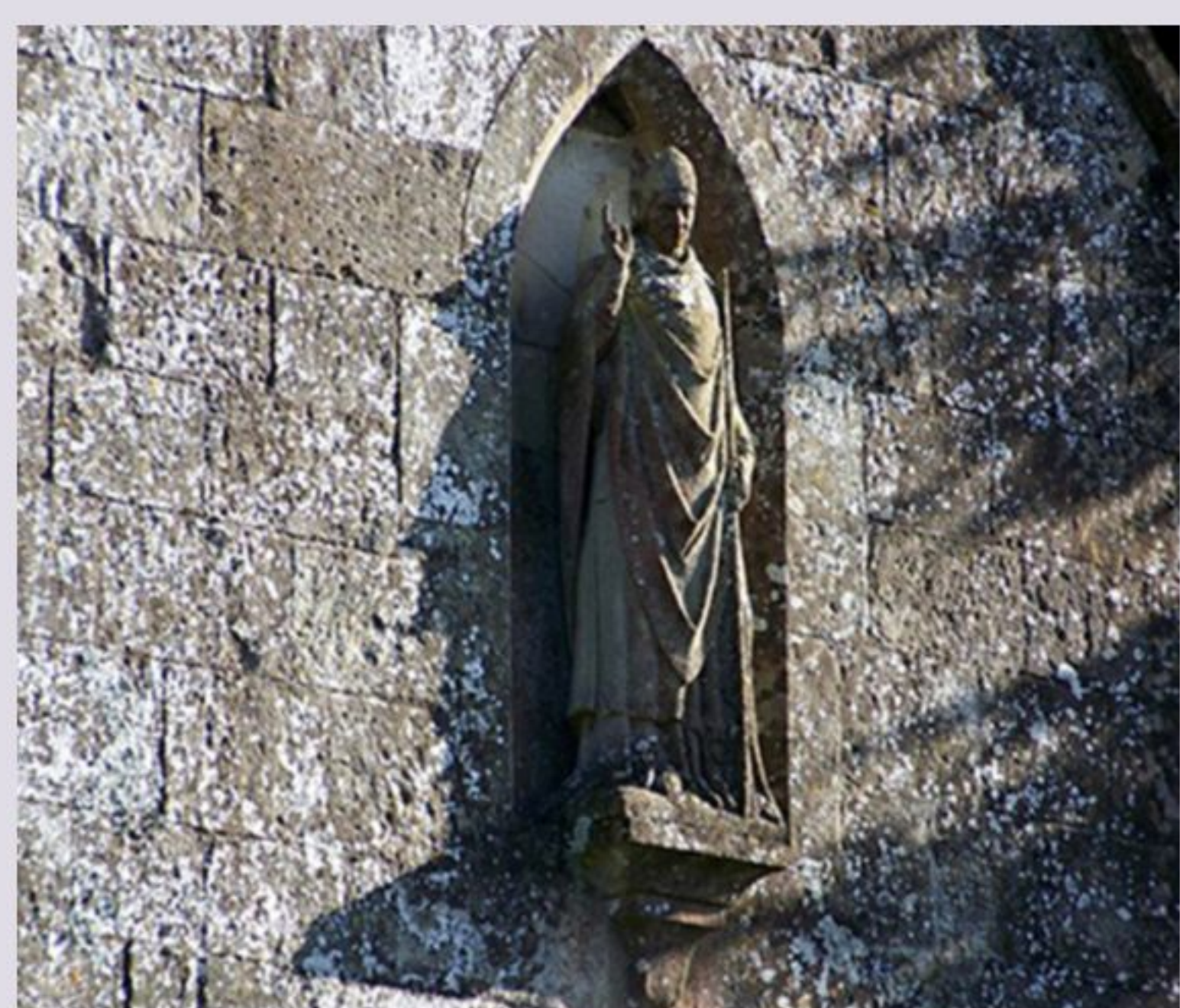
not in any of the numerous hoards of 1066, may mean that these coins represent a posthumous issue in the name of Harold, rather than having been struck during his lifetime. While the Wilton dies from the Chew Valley Hoard have not yet been studied in detail, the presence of so many Wilton coins from so many dies in a second hoard from William's reign seems to support that interpretation.

Why was Wilton so important? It was not a major town, but it did house an important nunnery under royal patronage. Edith, sister of Harold Godwinsson and widow of Edward the Confessor, had retired there after her husband's death, and remained personally one of the wealthiest people in the kingdom. Following the death of Harold and his brothers, she remained the last adult member of the house of Godwine, as well as the widow of a previous king. As such, she was potentially extremely important as a power broker in the period between Hastings and William's acceptance as king, either as a prize in marriage, or as a regent either for Harold's sons, or for Edgar the Atheling, the surviving claimant of her husband's dynasty. Her submission (on advantageous terms to herself) at Winchester effectively led to the end of resistance to William's rule, and it seems very likely that the coins were struck at Wilton under her

**Right: Silver penny of William I, moneyer Saewine of Wilton; unlike most other mints, Wilton saw a complete change in personnel in William's first type**



**Right: Chipped and cracked William I coin, moneyer Ælfwine of Winchester, and (below) bent William I coin, which also shows signs of wear, moneyer Leofwold of Wilton; many of the William coins in the hoard show circulation wear and damage**



**Above and below: Now partly rebuilt as a Victorian chapel, St Mary, Wilton began as an Anglo-Saxon parish church**



**Below: Silver penny of Harold II, moneyer Ælfwine of Wilton; coins may have continued to be issued in Harold's name at Wilton for a short period after the Battle of Hastings**



direction in the weeks immediately after Hastings.

The exact circumstances behind the burial of the Chew Valley Hoard are uncertain, but it also probably reflects the fact that William's victory at Hastings did not mean that he won immediate authority over the whole of England. A Welsh incursion into Herefordshire is recorded in 1067, and the following year William himself attacked Exeter, probably in response to unrest in the south-west. Later in 1068 Harold's sons, who had fled to Ireland, attacked up the Bristol Channel, raiding around the mouth of the Avon and unsuccessfully assaulting Bristol, before moving further south into Somerset. This would have brought them close to the Chew Valley area, and even if it was not the

direct cause of the hoard being buried, it is likely that the general period of insecurity represented by these events would have encouraged people to attempt to preserve their wealth.

All of the possible interpretations presented here will need to be tested and developed further through more extensive study of the hoard. The next step is for it to be secured for the future by a museum. The Roman Baths Museum in Bath holds the archaeological collections for Bath & North-East Somerset, and hopes to acquire the hoard, working in partnership with the British Museum and other organisations on the hoard's further interpretation and display.

*Gareth Williams is curator of early medieval coinage at the British Museum* ■



## Time for a Treasure hotline? Mike Pitts comments

It was an overcast Saturday when a group of friends walked out into a Somerset field with their detectors. One of them found a William I coin. Lisa Grace was suspicious – it looked too shiny. Then they found another William, then a Harold. Adam Staples, Grace’s partner, started digging. They were finding tens of coins within a minute. It was a hoard.

The first thing was to tell the farmer, who was soon there. Staples rang the local finds liaison officer (FLO), but there was no answer. He rang another, and went through a list. Still no answer. He rang Julian Evan-Hart, editor of *Treasure Hunting* magazine, to see if he could help – he knew Michael Lewis, head of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). Lewis was in France, but within 20 minutes they got a call from a FLO, and they discussed the situation.

There were 30 or 40 coins, spread over an area of 10m by 30m but mostly between two tramlines – tracks for tractor wheels – in an arable field green with regrowth from the previous summer’s stubble. All the coins were within 20–25cm of the surface. The FLO, Staples told me, did not feel there needed to be an archaeologist on site. They were advised to take a GPS reading, keep any coin clumps together and not to dig below the ploughsoil. After the call, as the

*Below: Silver pennies of William I showing the range of conditions, from excellent to bent, cracked and broken*



*Left: Unable to reach a finds liaison officer, say the detectorists, the first person they told about the Chew Valley Hoard was the editor of Treasure Hunting magazine*

*Below: Bath Abbey, a heavily restored early 16th-century church; a previously unknown Bath Harold mint is represented in the hoard by 59 coins*

weather turned and it poured with rain, the original find of a few dozen



coins grew to more than 2,500. On the Monday Staples and Grace drove to the British Museum with the coins, having carefully counted them out. In due course seven detectorists would be recognised as the official finders under the Treasure Act.

After the discovery had been reported in the April edition of *Treasure Hunting*, a press agency badgered the finders for exclusive rights to their story. The agency wanted to publish at once, but, Staples told me, the detectorists thought “peace and quiet was more attractive than a few quid”. In August the agency got wind of an imminent press event at the British Museum, when details of the hoard were to be released officially for the first time. Three days ahead of



the launch the *Mail Online* ran with a mix of hyperbole (“£1m more valuable than Staffordshire Hoard”), error (the field was said to be unploughed) and hearsay from a London dealer. Reading this, archaeologists were not impressed. Paul Barford, a blogger, alleged that both the detectorists and the PAS had “ignored” the *PAS Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England & Wales*.

This code says that you should stop “any digging and [make] the landowner aware that you are seeking expert help if you discover something below the ploughsoil, or a concentration of finds or unusual material”. *The Treasure Act Code of Practice* says it may be in “a finder’s



interests to obtain archaeological help in excavating unusual or fragile finds". That advice could be clearer. While both the National Council for Metal Detecting and the Federation of Independent Detectorists put their name to the original PAS *Code*, neither endorsed the current, 2017 revision.

These codes are voluntary, and the great majority of detector finds are single and in the ploughsoil (feature Jan/Feb 2018/158). But archaeologists would insist that an ancient hoard should be excavated slowly and scientifically, and not recovered at speed in the immediate excitement that can easily result from an unexpected find. It would be surprising if experienced detectorists were unaware of this.

Gareth Williams has noted the unfortunate dispersal of "individual clumps of coins" in the Chew Valley Hoard, despite advice given at the time of discovery; the finders may not have understood the significance of this, as even after groups had fallen apart in the sandy soil there was value in the associations. A common refrain from detectorists in such situations is that they daren't risk leaving a site for fear it be plundered by others (though they are not always reticent in spreading news of their finds). A significant factor must be the difficulty detectorists sometimes face in finding an archaeologist able to respond instantly with no notice – often at weekends or bank holidays. And there can be a cultural gulf between hobbyists with detectors and paid staff schooled for years in professional archaeological values.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme, managed by the British Museum, relies on staff (FLOS) at host partners across England and Wales; "most FLOS", says the PAS, "are now working at capacity, and therefore unable to record all finds". Detectorists are often in the field outside working hours. The PAS would benefit from more funding to allow it to expand its services to meet demand, and in particular to give more time to outreach and education – to achieve better understanding on both sides.

Specifically, there is a case for creating a new "Treasure hotline", offering rapid, informed advice to anyone who suspects they have made an in situ or hoard find, with the



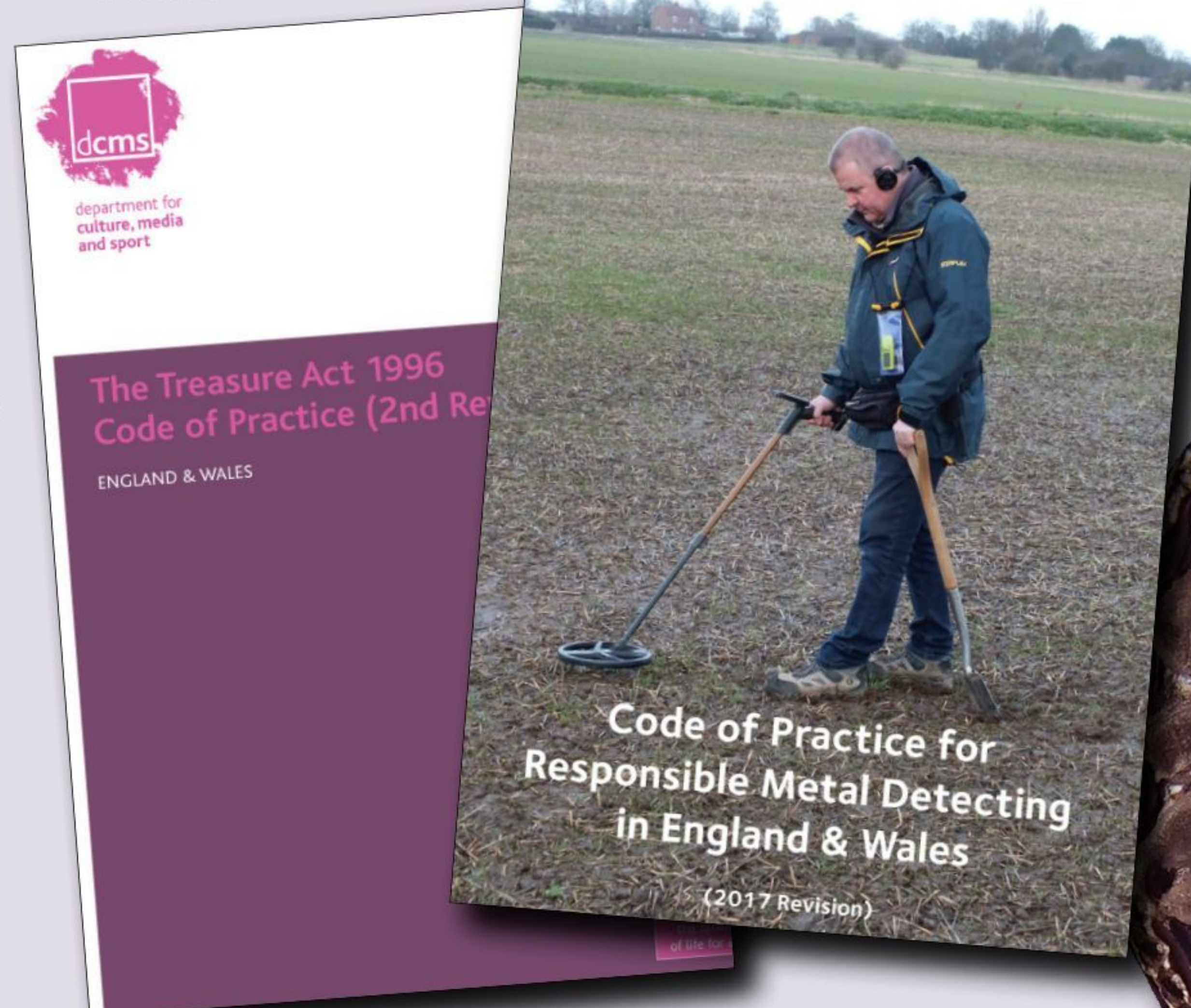
**Above: Remains of Lewes Castle, Sussex, originally built soon after the Battle of Hastings; 22 coins in the hoard were minted in Lewes**

**Far right: Penny of William I**

means, if necessary, of arranging a site visit from an archaeologist. The PAS was not designed to be an excavating service, and thought needs to be given to how proper excavation at detecting sites might be better managed; a survey in 2017 found that of 43 known

in situ detector finds, only 20 were excavated by archaeologists. Large sums of money change hands over some of the greatest detector finds, reflecting both their trade value and their public interest. Archaeology, not just the PAS, needs the resources to fully reflect that value and to meet the expectations of society's concern.

*Mike Pitts is the editor of British Archaeology* ■



**The Treasure Act says that "Where [a] hoard is not in an original container, the objects should be lifted as a group with surrounding soil"; the voluntary Code of Practice suggests "Stopping any digging... if you discover... a concentration of finds"**





# The many histories of the White Horse



Once upon a time someone felt the need to carve the figure of a giant white horse into the steep scarp of the chalk downs of north Wessex above the village of Uffington. This happened long ago, in the time of dreams, way beyond human memory.

In 1911 the popular writer GK Chesterton captured the mystery of the figure in *The Ballad of the White Horse*:

*Before the gods that made the gods  
Had seen the sunrise pass,  
The White Horse of the White  
Horse Vale  
Was cut out of the grass.*

People forgot who had made the horse and why. Nevertheless they adopted it for themselves, trying to make sense of this strange image on the skyline. Every few years they gathered together, often in huge numbers, to keep the horse gleaming, to celebrate with country sports and strong drink: a fine act of remembrance for the ancestors. The local communities made up stories, patched from scraps of the past. They recreated and re-imagined the horse to make sense to each new generation.

Perhaps the oldest surviving land art in the world, the White Horse of Uffington has fascinated and puzzled observers for centuries. In a new book David Miles puts his own scientific revelations into historic context

Against the odds the fragile but persistent White Horse at Uffington survived. It is an unusual image: fleeting and barely glimpsed except from the sky; a sleek, segmented, abstract figure about 120m long, it appears to leap across the downs, unrestrained. The fragmented limbs and sinuous shape convey fluidity and movement. Turn away and the animal could disappear over the western horizon.

There are other hill figures, or what academics like to call geoglyphs, in Britain: mostly horses which stand rigidly to attention. Undoubtedly the Uffington White Horse is the most

stylish, a real work of art; it is also the oldest: the dam or the sire of the others. Documentary evidence supports the horse's pedigree. Most telling is a later 12th-century chronicle listing the 35 "Wonders of Britain". The "wonder" of Uffington was that no grass could grow there, implying that the image was miraculous. There is no apparent interest in who made it, when or why. Nor any obvious awareness that without the continual care of the local community the White Horse would fade and disappear – perhaps in as little as a decade or two.

## Out of the mists of time

The land about this area of north Berkshire (now Oxfordshire) is exceptionally well-endowed with Anglo-Saxon charters. Royal and religious owners were keen to define their property. Distinctive long, thin parishes – Ashbury, Compton Beauchamp, Woolstone, Uffington and Kingston Lisle – straddle the ground between the high, dry chalk down and the fertile valley, known as the Vale of the White Horse. These





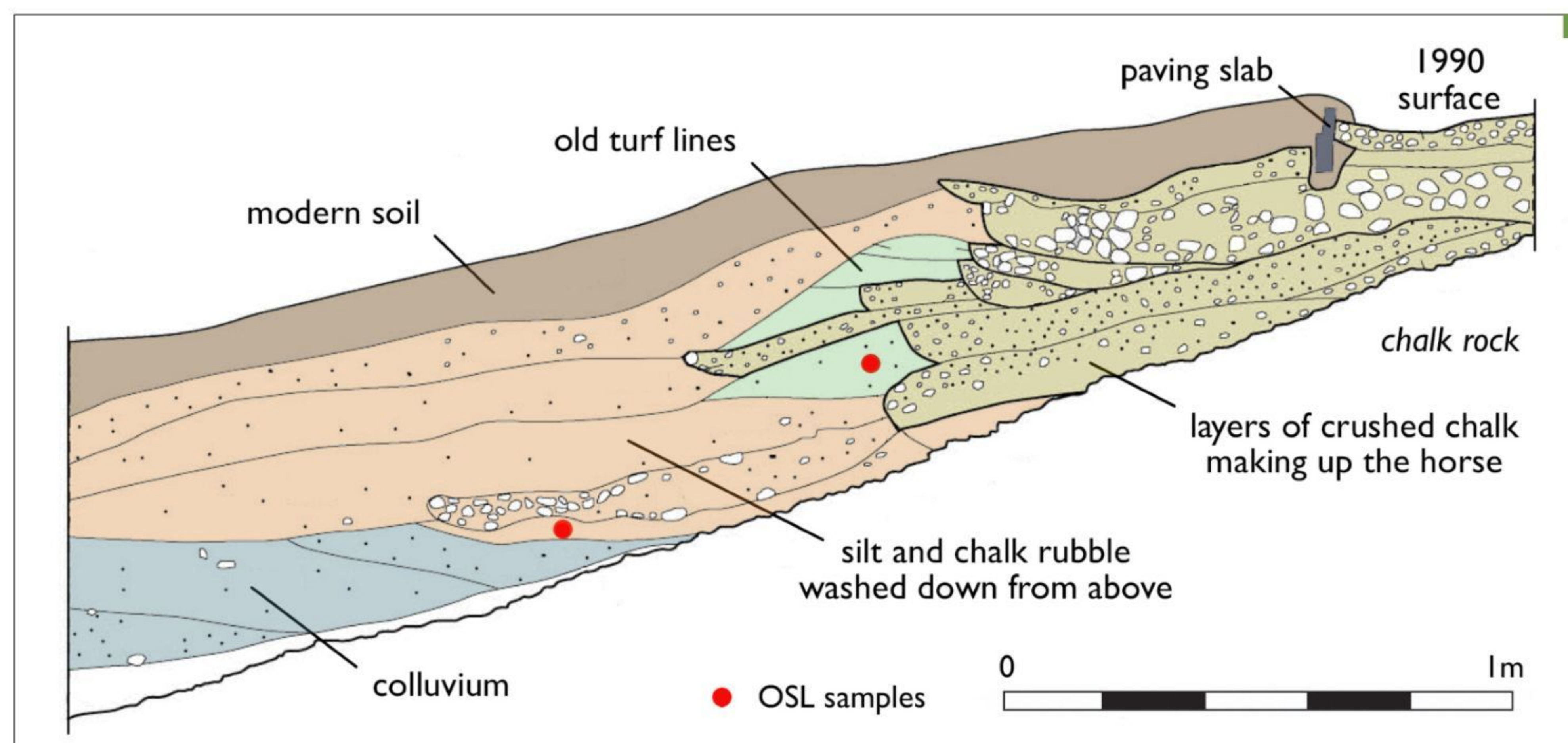
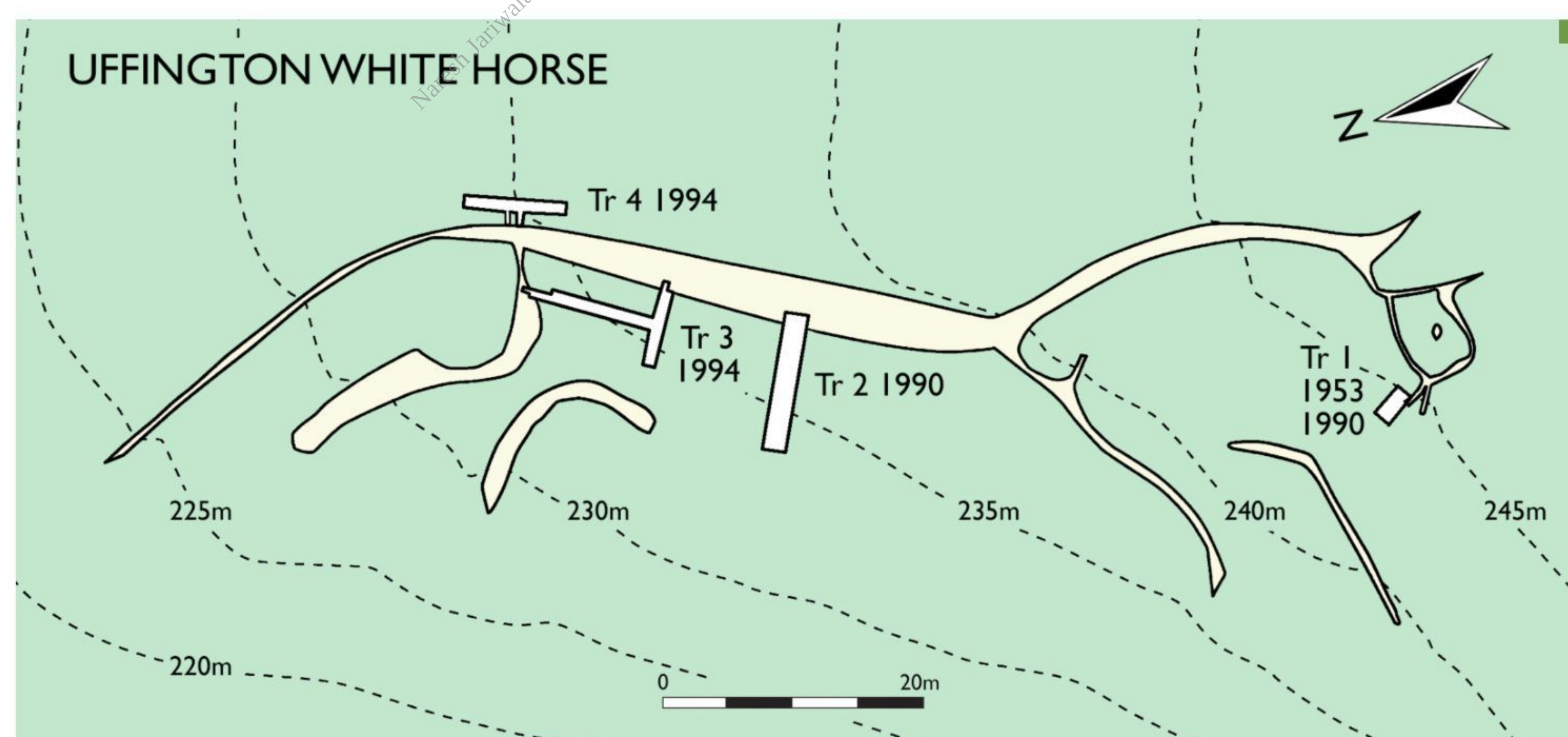
**Right: Excavation into the horse's beak by WF Grimes in 1953, revealing older chalk layers beneath the modern one**

**Below: Excavation by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in the 1990s included revisiting Grimes's unpublished backfilled trench**



strips conform substantially to the bounds in Domesday Book in 1086, and the earlier Old English estate boundaries of the ninth to 11th centuries. The bounds provide a fascinating picture of a precisely defined and intensively used landscape a thousand years ago. Especially on the open downland, ancient features – Bronze Age barrows, prehistoric enclosures, linear ditches, the Ridgeway path and the Neolithic tomb, already known as Wayland's Smithy – provided landmarks along the estate boundaries.

But where is the White Horse? Its name does not appear in any of the charters. So did it not exist at that time?



We should, of course, beware of the old maxim “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence”. The charters which mark the western boundary of Uffington, where it reaches the highest point of the downs and descends into the vale, have a wealth of marker features all precisely on the boundary line. The surveyors were practical people with a specific job to do. They were not writing a guidebook. For them a hill figure, even a small distance

**Left: East-west section into horse's lower body in Trench 3; OSL samples bracket the lowest layer of crushed chalk, dating it to sometime in the Bronze or Iron Age (see page 24)**





off-line, was not relevant to the task in hand.

After the Norman Conquest we have the cartularies of Abingdon Abbey. A document of 1273 refers to “the Whithors” and another, in 1307, to Compton *sub Album Equum* – Compton under the White Horse. By the 17th century the White Horse was well-known, yet still there was little curiosity shown about its origin. The antiquary John Aubrey (1626–97) was the first to pose the question. His travels between his family home near Avebury, Wiltshire, and his alma mater, Oxford

University, meant he knew the Vale of the White Horse well.

Aubrey suggested that the first Saxon kings, Hengist and Horsa, would have taken possession of this fertile land. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle these invaders of Britain landed in Kent in about AD450. Both their names meant “horse” or “stallion” and, supposedly, the White Horse was their standard. So it made sense to Aubrey that the hill figure should commemorate the *Adventus Saxonum*, the arrival of the English in their new land. Aubrey was no single-issue fanatic.

**Above: Looking south, the Uffington White Horse lies at the head of a dry valley (the Manger, lower right) between a natural circular mound (Dragon Hill, left) and Uffington Castle hillfort; the white track above the fort runs along the Ridgeway**

He also drew attention to an ancient British coin found at Colchester (Camulodunum) and noted the figure of a horse on the reverse which put him in mind of the White Horse. So could it pre-date the Romans?

The idea of Anglo-Saxon origins took hold, until the arrival on the scene of the Reverend Francis Wise of Trinity College, Oxford. In 1738 he travelled to the downs around Uffington for a few days’ gentle fieldwork, in search of the site of the Battle of Ashdown – where in AD871 the Prince Alfred and his brother King Æthelred, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, fought “against the whole army of the Danes”.

Wise “was greatly surprised to find my expectations answered in every respect”. Every element in the historic landscape neatly fitted into his foregone conclusion. Uffington Castle was “a large Roman entrenchment occupied by the Danes”. Another nearby hillfort, now known as Hardwell Camp, had been “fortified after the Saxon manner”. Barrows marked the burial places of the illustrious dead, and the White Horse itself commemorated the heroic English victory over the heathen Danes.

This was all dubious speculation of a high order. It brought forth a superb squirt of vitriol – a rejoinder in the form of a pamphlet entitled *The Impertinence & Imposture of Modern Antiquarian Display* by one Philalethes Rusticus, probably the ambitious Reverend William Asplin (1687–1758), vicar of Banbury. This derided the supposed Saxon origin and drew attention to the horse images on British coins. The wider public, however, was attracted to the idea of an English White Horse marking the defeat of foreign invaders. And Prince Alfred became King Alfred the Great, hero, intellectual, supposedly the founder of the Royal Navy and Oxford University: the greatest of English monarchs.

By May 22 1780, when the local newspaper reported “Upwards of thirty thousand persons... amongst them most of the nobility and gentry of this and neighbouring counties” enjoying the ceremonial scouring of the White Horse, it had become a “noble monument of Saxon antiquity”. It had been successfully re-invented as a unifying symbol of Christian England, bringing together monarchy, aristocracy and the population as a whole. Like the River Thames, it could be seen as a



national symbol and a “balm for political friction”; it was an English fantasy.

The scouring was popular among the elite, and following the Uffington events between 1776 and 1843 new hill figures proliferated, mostly in Wiltshire. The figure at Osmington, Dorset, was dedicated to the remarkably popular “Farmer” George III, who came to the throne in 1760 and unlike the previous Hanoverians was born in England. White horses became a ubiquitous image of his reign, on coinage, medals and coats of arms displayed in churches.

## Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon?

Britain avoided the bloody revolutions of France and North America, but was in the forefront of the industrial and agricultural revolutions which transformed the country. The stresses of falling wages and rising prices were felt particularly by the rural and urban labouring classes, who increasingly resented a corrupt political system which favoured the wealthy. The unrest and civic rupture in both town and country may explain the reluctance of the landed gentry, notably Lord Craven, the owner of White Horse Hill, to

promote scouring events in the early 19th century.

It was partly to heal these wounds that a small gathering of local worthies met in the Craven Arms in Uffington on August 20 1857, to organise the first “Scouring and Pastime” for 14 years. Edwin Martin-Atkins – squire, magistrate and antiquarian – was the prime mover. Thomas Hughes supported him; a local lawyer rising to fame thanks to his recently published book *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. Hughes, a reforming, muscular Christian, chronicled the 1857 events in his semi-fictional novel *The Scouring of the White Horse*. *The Scouring* is no literary masterpiece, yet it remains a valuable depiction of the Pastime, the traditional games which Wise called the “Saxon Olympiks”. Hughes subjects us to a rather dreary account of the Battle of Ashdown and Alfred’s supposed creation of the White Horse. To the disgust of some of his patriotic contemporaries, Hughes later changed his mind and came down on the side of archaeologists who supported the ancient British theory. He was probably most influenced by JY Akerman (1806–73), secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, who lived nearby and

was a member of the 1857 Scouring & Pastime Committee.

Hughes believed that the scouring was a great success. However, it was fundamentally backward looking, rowing against the tide of urbanisation and new popular entertainment – theatres, music halls, increasingly professional sporting events and the attractions of the seaside. The 1857 scouring was the last of its kind.

In spite of growing population and prosperity in the late 19th century, the White Horse was in danger of neglect to the point of disappearance. And archaeological re-interpretation did not help. If the horse was no work of heroic Christianity, then it became a “pagan and foreign monument”. Visitors in the 1880s and 90s reported that it was scarcely visible. Unfortunately it was not included in the schedule of sites listed in the first Ancient Monuments Protection Act (1882) – perhaps because of uncertainty about its age. This was rectified in 1929, shortly after Sir Flinders Petrie had bestowed a degree of academic respectability with the first accurate survey of the figure, and his argument, albeit unconvincing, that the White Horse was of Bronze Age date.

A Young Turk came galloping into

*Below: A classic view of the Uffington White Horse from the air*



ROGER ROZENCWALD/PHOTONONSTOP/DIOMEDIA





**Left: Looking north from the head of the horse**

the controversy in the form of Stuart Piggott. Writing in the influential and cutting-edge journal *Antiquity* in 1931, Piggott argued for an Iron Age date, based on the old argument of the horse's style. Coming from a 22-year-old who had not been to university this was a remarkably coherent and cogent piece of work. The imprimatur of *Antiquity's* charismatic editor, OGS Crawford, and Piggott's later deserved reputation as one of our finest prehistorians, also gave the piece an unusual and continuing authority.

So for most archaeologists the matter was settled. It is not surprising therefore that when eventually the next challenge came, it arrived from left flank in the form of a folklorist, Diana Woolner. She argued in articles in 1965 and 1967 that the White Horse had changed shape: what we see today is an anorexic version of the original. Thus she undermined Piggott's stylistic argument. Historically, and in the context of the landscape, an early Anglo-Saxon (not Alfredian) date made

the most sense.

Once again we were back in uncertain territory, though Woolner's theory had one advantage – it was testable by excavation. In the early 1980s the

National Trust proposed to improve the conservation and management of White Horse Hill. On behalf of the Council for British Archaeology, Peter Fowler and I had been in discussion with the trust about the need to survey its holdings comprehensively – to protect archaeological sites which it possessed, sometimes unknowingly. White Horse Hill seemed a good place to put the ideas into practice.

## A scientific date

At the same time, Simon Palmer, my colleague at the Oxford Archaeological Unit, and I suggested we could also have a shot at dating the White Horse. The immediate reaction from the authorities was negative. "It is just a mark made by removing the turf" was the common response. Attitudes changed thanks to excavations into the old Ministry of Works files in the unlikely setting of the Elephant & Castle in London. Here we found documents that had slept peacefully since the 1950s. One was a finely drawn section through the horse's beak, which showed a metre of stratigraphy – several successive chalk beaks. Eventually we were able to put together the story. During the Second World War hill figures were covered so as not to provide signposts for the Luftwaffe. Afterwards Peter Grimes, who later headed up the Institute of Archaeology in London and dug the Mithras Temple, uncovered the Uffington Horse – and, it seems, took the opportunity to dig into the beak. Unfortunately he kept the information

**Below: View from tail end in fog**







**Left: Thomas Hughes's *The Scouring of the White Horse* (1859), decorated by Richard "Dickie" Doyle; the horse faces backwards**

**Right: Doyle's depiction of the horse scouring of 1857; Hughes was on the organising committee, including the accompanying *Pastime***



DAVID MILES (3)

to himself. However, our discovery in the archives created a more positive attitude to new investigation.

There was lots of other work to do – detailed surveys on the ground and from the air, geophysics and small-scale excavation to examine the hillfort and various possible barrow sites. In particular we wanted to locate excavations by Martin-Atkins in the 1850s to check his results. Over the next few years English Heritage's survey teams also plotted the crop- and soil-marks of the surrounding downland, and carried out geophysics inside the hillforts along the Ridgeway.

Chris Gosden, Gary Lock and their

**Right: Pig chasing, one of the less serious events of the 1857 *Pastime* on White Horse Hill**



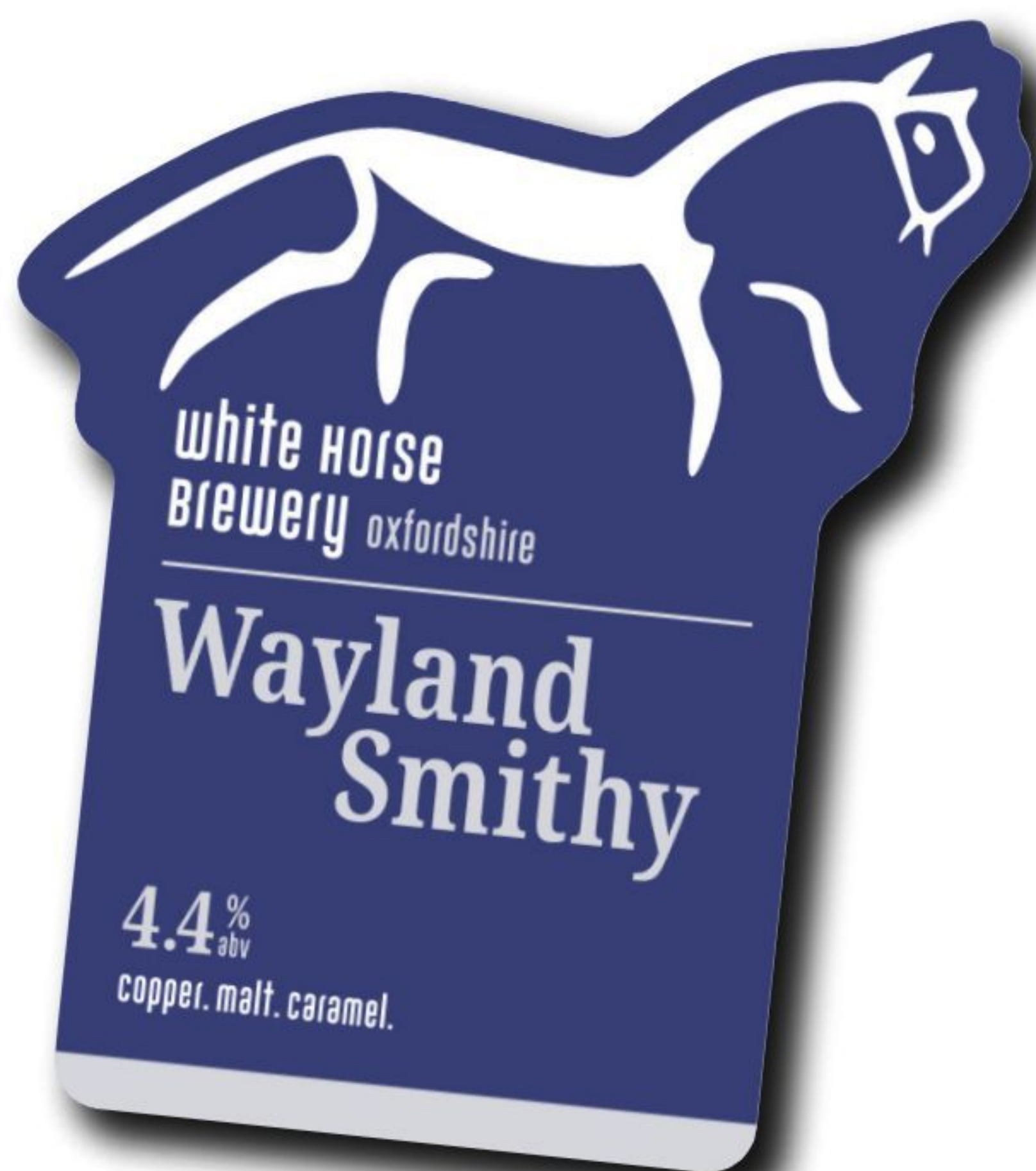
**Below: Repairing the chalk at the horse in 2008**



students from Oxford University also joined us in the excavation of Uffington Castle, and continued investigations at Segsbury Camp to the east and Alfred's Castle to the south-west. The results showed that the so-called hillforts were remarkably varied in date, size and function. Uffington Castle and Liddington first appeared about 800BC, at the time of the Bronze Age/Iron Age

transition, when the landscape became extensively covered with field boundaries, many of which continued in use into Roman times. The Ridgeway was far from being a simple trackway. While a broad, shifting routeway may have run along the chalk crest for millennia, there is no guarantee that today, in any specific place, we are walking in prehistoric footsteps.

DENNIS SIMPSON/GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK/CC BY-SA 2.0, WHITE HORSE BREWERY OXFORDSHIRE, ANNA DILLON



**Left: The Uffington horse is a badge of identity for local organisations, here a brewery and its "dark copper Wayland Smithy ale with toasty aroma and caramel and malt flavours"**

**Right: Frost on Uffington by Anna Dillon (1996)**





*Left: Excavation of a horse and chariot pit in a tomb belonging to a noble family of the Zheng State, near Xinzheng, Henan Province, China (500BC)*

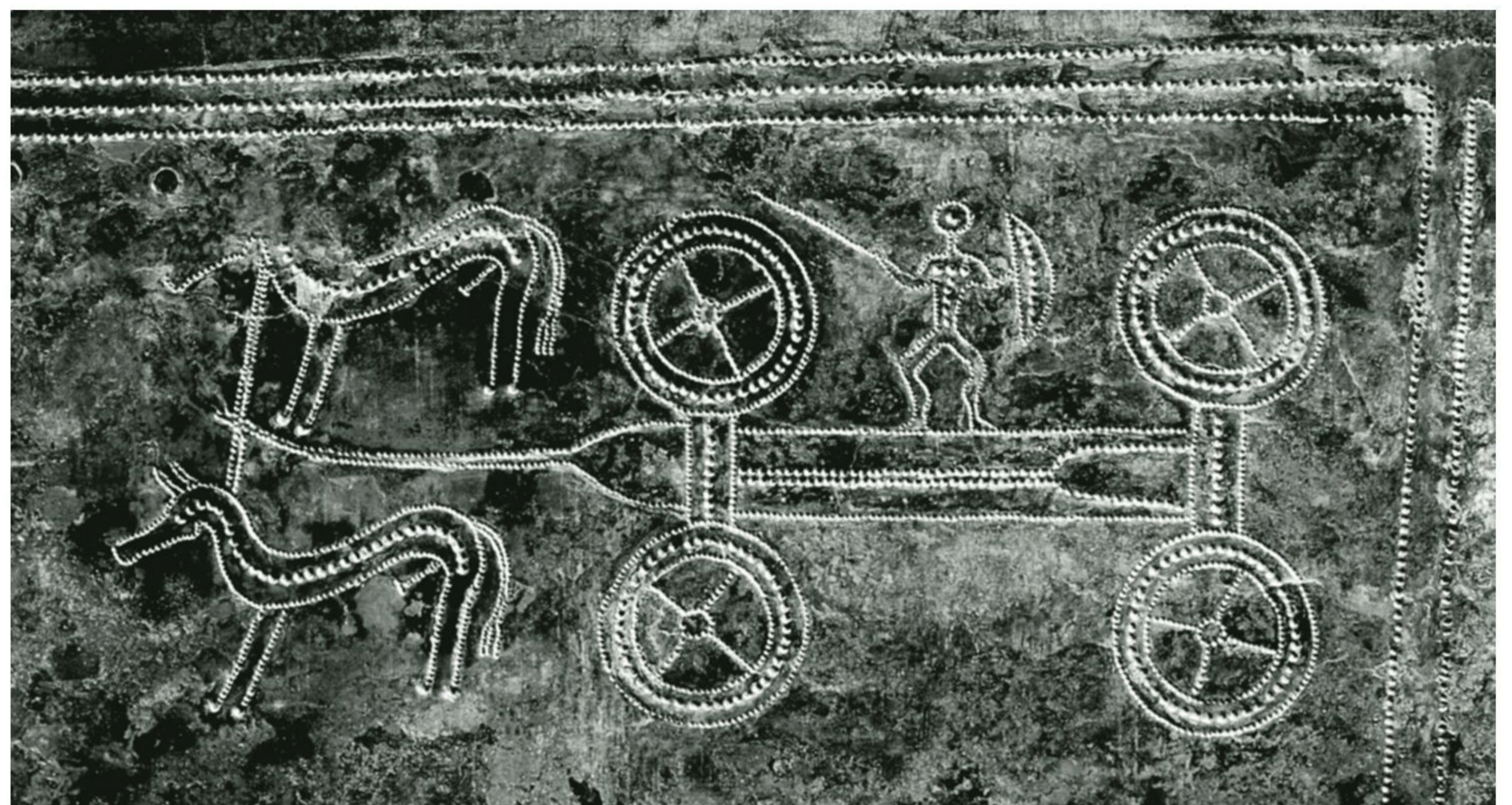
*Below: Mounted warriors surround a standing female figure on a bronze cult chariot from a tomb at Strettweg, Germany (seventh century BC)*

The slowness of the project turned into a blessing. In Oxford's Research Laboratory for Art & Archaeology I heard about a new dating method, optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) which could extract dates from crystals of buried minerals such as quartz and feldspar. Could it work on the body of the horse? "Not easy, but possible," was the answer from Mike Tite and Julie Rees-Jones, the OSL researchers. OSL is now a standard dating method but those were early days.

Our excavation into the head and belly of the horse confirmed what we suspected. The figure had been cut into the loamy, mixed soil of the scarp and then filled, successively, with layers of clean white chalk, quarried from nearby. Diana Woolner's theory was wrong: the horse has not changed its shape and size much at all. Over the years, however, it has tilted upwards from the bottom so that originally it would have been easier to see from below.

The horse's body had also been kept clean – hopeless for radiocarbon samples – but OSL provided the lifeline. The results, it should be emphasised, were not precise, providing a date range for the horse between 1380 and 550BC at a 65% confidence level (1740–210BC at 95%, spanning the Early Bronze Age to the Middle Iron Age). Dates of 750–650BC from Uffington Castle supported the artefactual evidence, so the hillfort and the horse could have been built at

*Right: A four-wheeled chariot or cart drawn by two stylised horses, on a bronze couch in the Hochdorf burial, Germany (sixth century BC)*



about the same time. Yet the builders did not live in the fort, which had, at most, a small and possibly not permanent population.

White Horse Hill was a sacred place – where the populations from the surrounding countryside came together at important times in the calendar. It was certainly a place where the dead were buried – in a Neolithic long mound, in several Bronze Age barrows, in a substantial Romano-British cemetery, and again in the barrows when they were re-used in Anglo-Saxon times. Roman coins and artefacts inside the hillfort confirm the enclosure's continuous use. We located no temple structure, but two additional entrances through the rampart were constructed at that time.





G DAGLI ORTI/DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIB/ALG-IMAGES

## Celestial drama

Two significant questions remain. Why was the White Horse made? And how did such a fragile creature survive? The answer to the second is probably “luck”, and the fact that the constantly shifting meaning of the horse allowed it to retain its significance to successive generations, through changes of language, culture and religion.

At dawn the sun rising over the hill figure is a spectacular sight. Recently Josh Pollard developed the argument that the sun was the most important element in Bronze Age cosmology, drawn through the sky originally on a ship, but then by

horses, as they spread from the steppes of Eurasia and became significant, high status animals.

White Horse Hill, with its geoglyph, is a carefully

*Above: A gold torc from the Vix tomb, France, has a winged horse on each terminal, rare Celtic representations influenced by Greek and Scythian art and the Classical myth of Pegasus (480BC)*

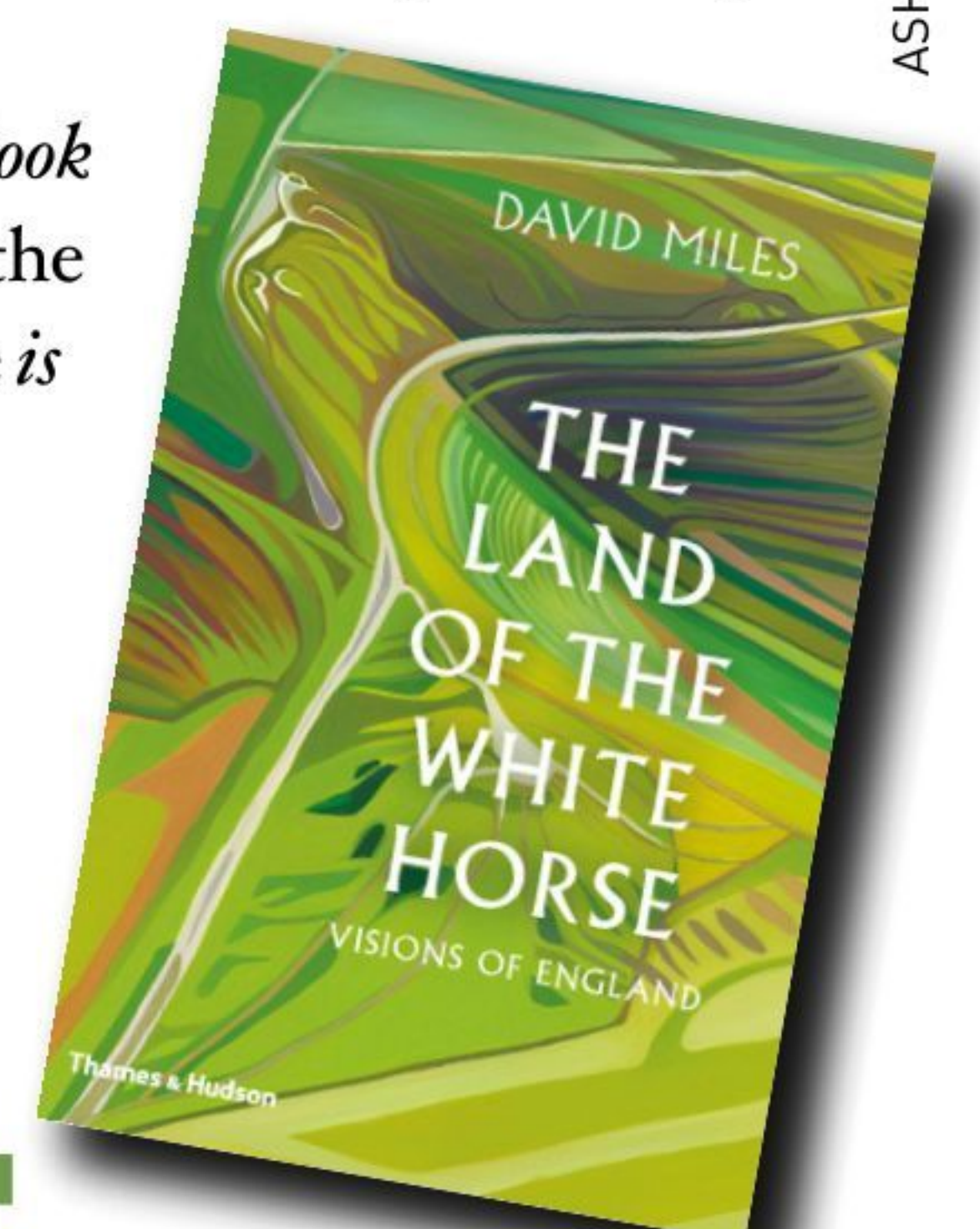


*Left: A local Atrebat coin (50BC); the horse, whose beaked head is superficially similar to the Uffington figure, has a distinctive triple tail and is associated with wheel/sun and moon symbols*

choreographed piece of prehistoric theatre, designed to allow observers to watch the great celestial drama – the sun drawn through the daytime sky, disappearing in the west, and reappearing after its nocturnal journey. Remarkably we can still watch the drama unfold today.

*David Miles was director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit and chief archaeologist at English*

*Heritage; his book The Land of the White Horse is published on September 26. White Horse Hill is owned by the National Trust and is free to access* ■



ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM OXFORD UNIVERSITY/BRIDGEMAN



# The Staffordshire Hoard: a Mercian royal treasure



*Some exceptional  
items from the  
Staffordshire Hoard*

The findings of the Staffordshire Hoard reveal a golden age. The trove of elite, early Anglo-Saxon metalwork is unparalleled, comprising over 600 objects from war gear and church riches, totalling 4kg of gold and 1.7kg of silver. They display the high arts of late sixth- and seventh-century England at their pinnacle of achievement. Only the famous regalia of Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, discovered 70 years earlier in Mound 1 at the royal cemetery, are a match for its finest treasures. In fact, finds from the two sites demonstrate remarkable stylistic

**Ten years after the Staffordshire Hoard was revealed to the world, the much-anticipated definitive monograph will be published on November 1. Chris Fern, the project's academic lead, outlines the study's key conclusions for British Archaeology**

and manufacturing links, and are close enough in date to suggest a real connection, in a time according to history of continuous warfare between kingdoms against a background of Christian conversion. Above all the Staffordshire Hoard is a jewel of the kingdom of Mercia – at least in terms of where it was found, near Lichfield in the West Midlands. However, study of the collection's forms, techniques and ornament has indicated the potential for “kingdom styles” of metalwork produced in different and widespread royal workshops.



## Battle loot

The Staffordshire Hoard's special nature is well established, the collection being almost exclusively of gold and silver, and its pieces being parts dismantled from the equipment of the ruling warrior class and to a lesser extent the newly formed church. There are no feminine objects such as brooches, and no coins. Fittings from weapon hilts or scabbards account for about 80% by object count. While a few finds stand out as the possible possessions of princes and even kings, the quantity overall indicates that most of the ornate swords that were stripped must have belonged to the *comitatus* of kingdoms: warriors in

collection could have been maintained above ground perhaps for decades, possibly serving for its powerful owner as a memento of defeated enemies, as well as being valuable bullion. It is estimated that the weapon fittings indicate in excess of 100 swords, a number that suggests the arms of the military leaders of more than one campaign. We have few historic details of battles, but the Anglo-Saxon historian Bede (died 735) recorded that for a large army of 655 there were 30 *duces regii* (warrior commanders and lesser kings), exactly the sorts of individuals that would have owned swords like those represented in the hoard.

grips, almost 60 pairs were identified. The conclusion is that swords and fighting knives (seaxes) must have been manufactured with hilt parts with matching ornament. Most outstanding are five fittings from the grip of a seax knife in gold and garnet cloisonné. Both the style and proficiency of the ornament make comparison with the Sutton Hoo regalia inevitable, notably the latter's exquisite shoulder clasps, and while there are differences, it is at least a possibility that they are products of a single East Anglian workshop. Further pommels, collars and other fittings are also in a garnet cloisonné style that includes the use of



royal service given ornate weapons as rewards and symbols of loyal service. The church equipment would similarly have been commissioned by kings for their new Christian institutions, and such portable treasures could equally have served as battlefield talismans.

Hence the assemblage can be interpreted as battle loot – but not necessarily from a single battle – the finds showing how they were removed, crudely with knives and smithing tongs, and with no care for their high artistic or social value. The metalwork chronology suggests that the

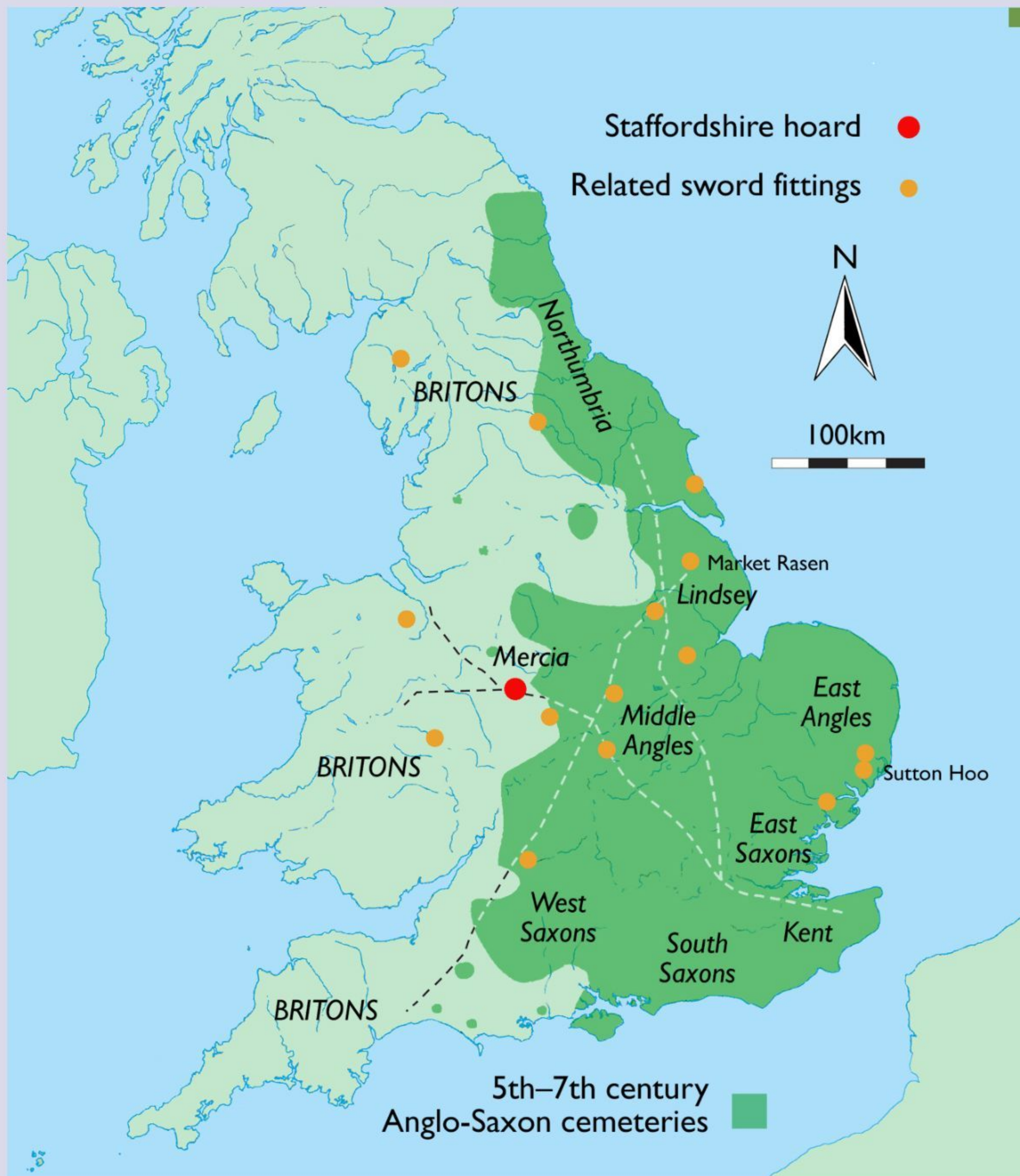
*Above: Some of the pieces from the hoard as found*

As the collection progressed through conservation and research (see features on discovery, Nov/Dec 2009/109 and conservation, Jul/Aug 2013/131), and its 4,600 fragments were reassembled into more complete objects, it became apparent that the assemblage had structure. Ultimately, I was able to observe hundreds of relationships between objects, especially matching pairs and larger sets of fittings that shared characteristics of manufacture and style. For instance, among the over 150 hilt-collars and hilt-rings from weapon

“mushroom” cellwork, another trait of goldsmithing in the kingdom of East Anglia.

Most well-represented is a style in gold filigree. The hoard's dozens of pommels and collars with the ornament have a small number of parallels found north of the Thames, most significant of which is a set from Market Rasen, Lincolnshire. Like the hoard, most of these other objects could have travelled far from where they were made, though determining place of manufacture is difficult because most are isolated finds from





*Left: The hoard was found at the very limit of Anglo-Saxon England in the border territory of Mercia*

on a great cross and a large plaque of a fish between eagles. A further feature of over 140 objects is animal art, mostly of a type known as Salin's Style II. The style that features birds, quadrupeds (four-legged creatures in profile), serpents, boars and fantastical "zoomorphs" was widespread in Europe from the later sixth century, and is characterised by a tendency for interlaced compositions, as well as by deliberate ambiguity. It was a style of the elite and it is very likely that its meaning was linked with Germanic myths and religious beliefs. However, it has mostly been studied in terms of its chronological development. Given the quantity of new material contributed by the hoard, this fact presented a clear opportunity for dating in the absence of coins; radiocarbon dating of organic material within the collection – including tiny scraps of linen, horn and wood, and beeswax in gem settings – has so far not proved possible.

*Below: People queue outside Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery to see the hoard in 2009; it is now on permanent display there and at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent*

Parallels for the forms of the animal art exist in relative abundance on objects across Europe, and many instances are securely dated. The research outcome has been to establish for the first time that two forms of Style II were followed in Anglo-Saxon England that are chronologically sequential (but with

metal detecting. Perhaps the style is of the kingdom of Lindsey (modern Lincolnshire), or of Northumbria to the north, but proof must await future discoveries.

### Age of gold

Gold-wire filigree and garnet cloisonné are techniques well known from Anglo-Saxon goldsmithing, but others are rare, like the incising in gold





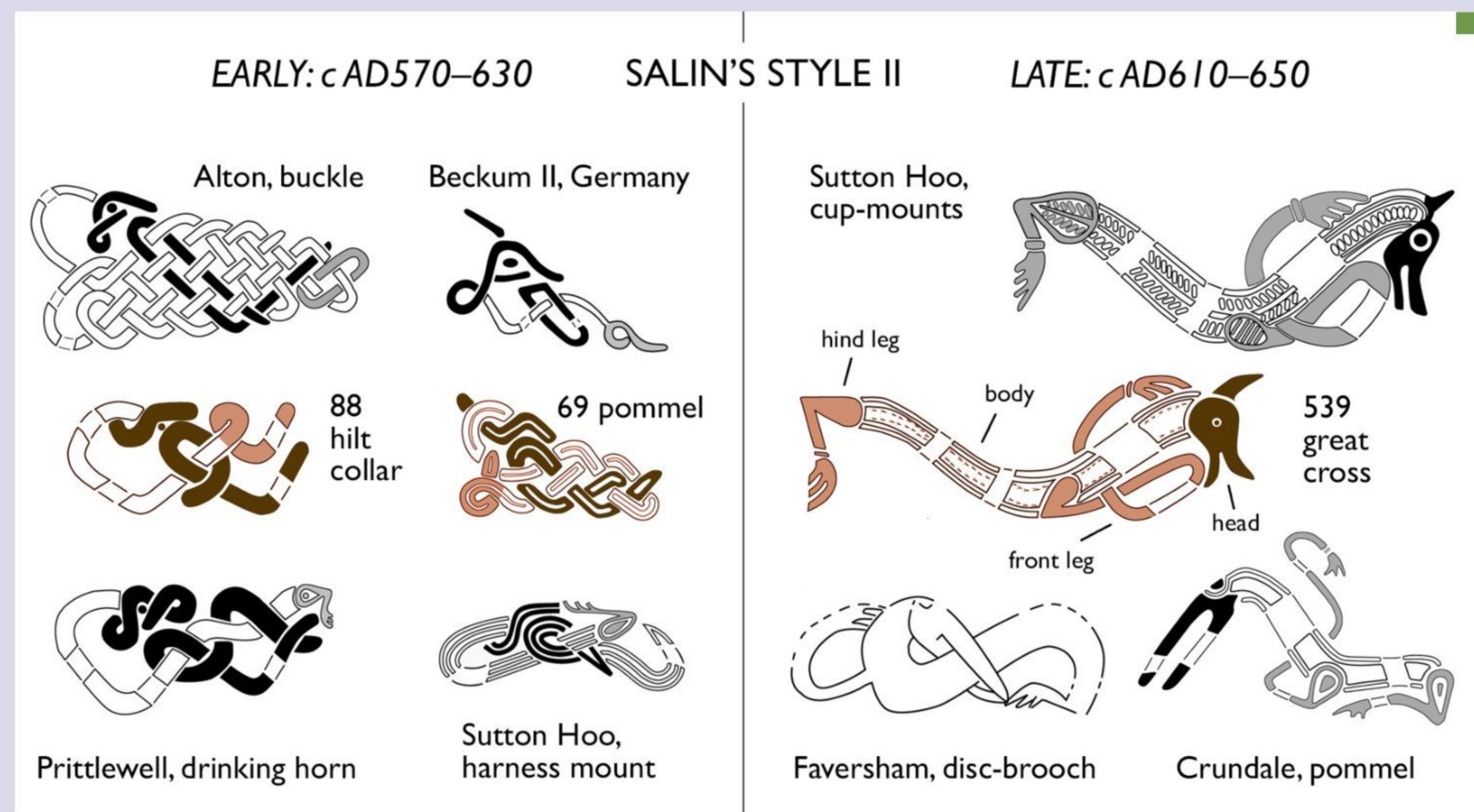
some overlap suggested). “Anglo-Saxon early Style II” (around AD570–630) is above all characterised by zoomorphic interlace, as seen on the filigree-style weapon fittings, the creatures being typically highly abstract and sometimes sharing body parts with each other. “Anglo-Saxon late Style II” (around 610–650), in comparison, presents us with more recognisable animal quadrupeds. Examples include the art of the garnet cloisonné seax fittings, and the creatures on the great gold cross. It has been shown, furthermore, that one motif on the great cross is identical to one on cups from the Sutton Hoo burial, pointing yet again to an intimate connection with the elite of the East Anglian region.

Most of the hoard’s 74 pommels are of a form (Menghin’s type Beckum–Vallstenarum) that was in use from around 570–650, and other object parallels suggest a similar date range for the majority of the collection. Such arguments combined with the new style dating suggest four “phases” of metalwork for the hoard.

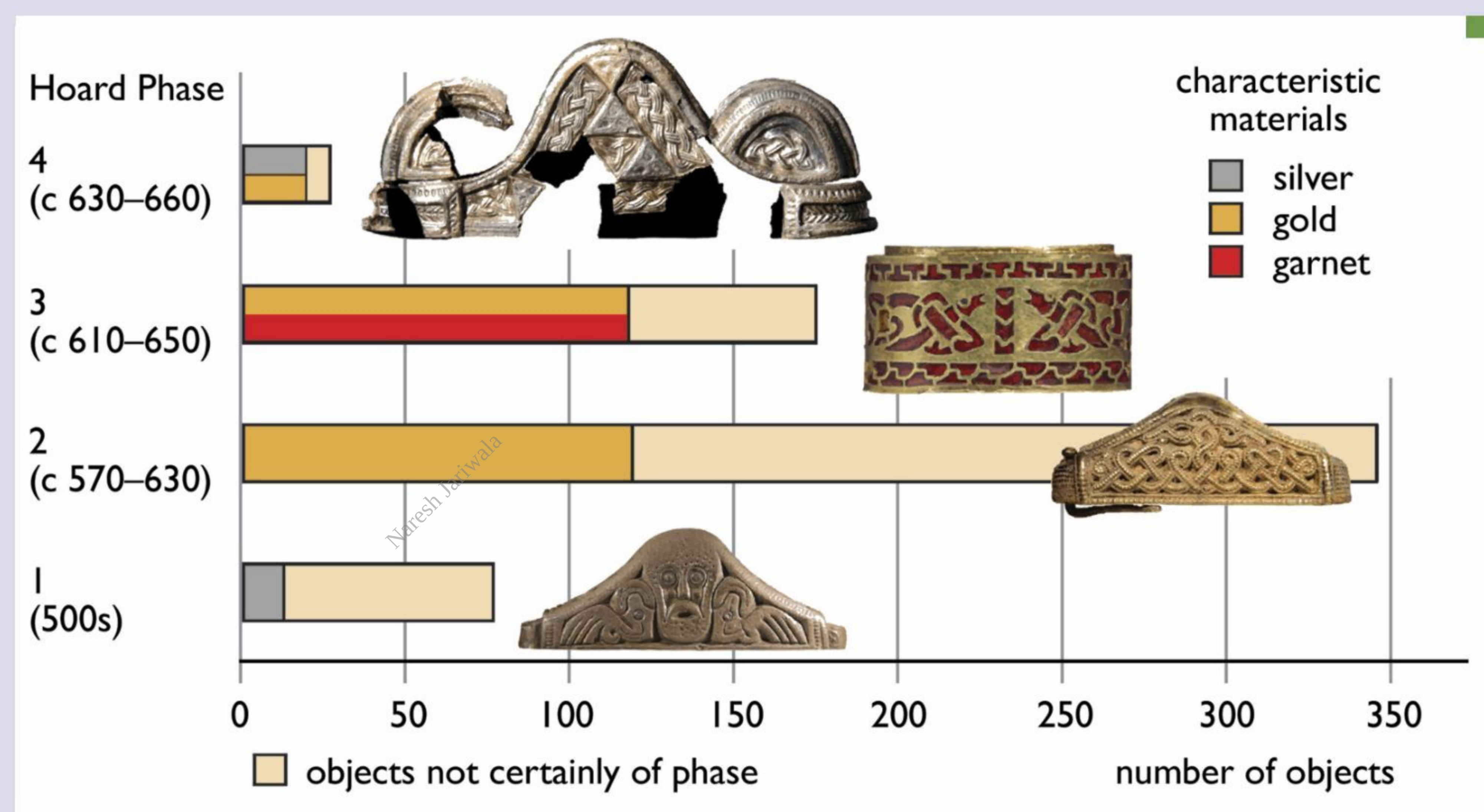
The oldest (Phase 1, sixth century) comprises silver fittings from swords, including a pair of hilt-collars with Style I animal art (the style preceding Style II). It is believed the weapons represented could have been true heirlooms, and certainly were antiques when dismantled.

The bulk of the gold objects were manufactured and in use from the late sixth to mid seventh centuries. The many fittings with filigree ornament and early Style II are also generally earlier in date (Phase 2, around 570–630) with a number demonstrating heavy wear from use. The objects with all-over garnet cloisonné and late Style II on the whole show less wear (Phase 3, around 610–650).

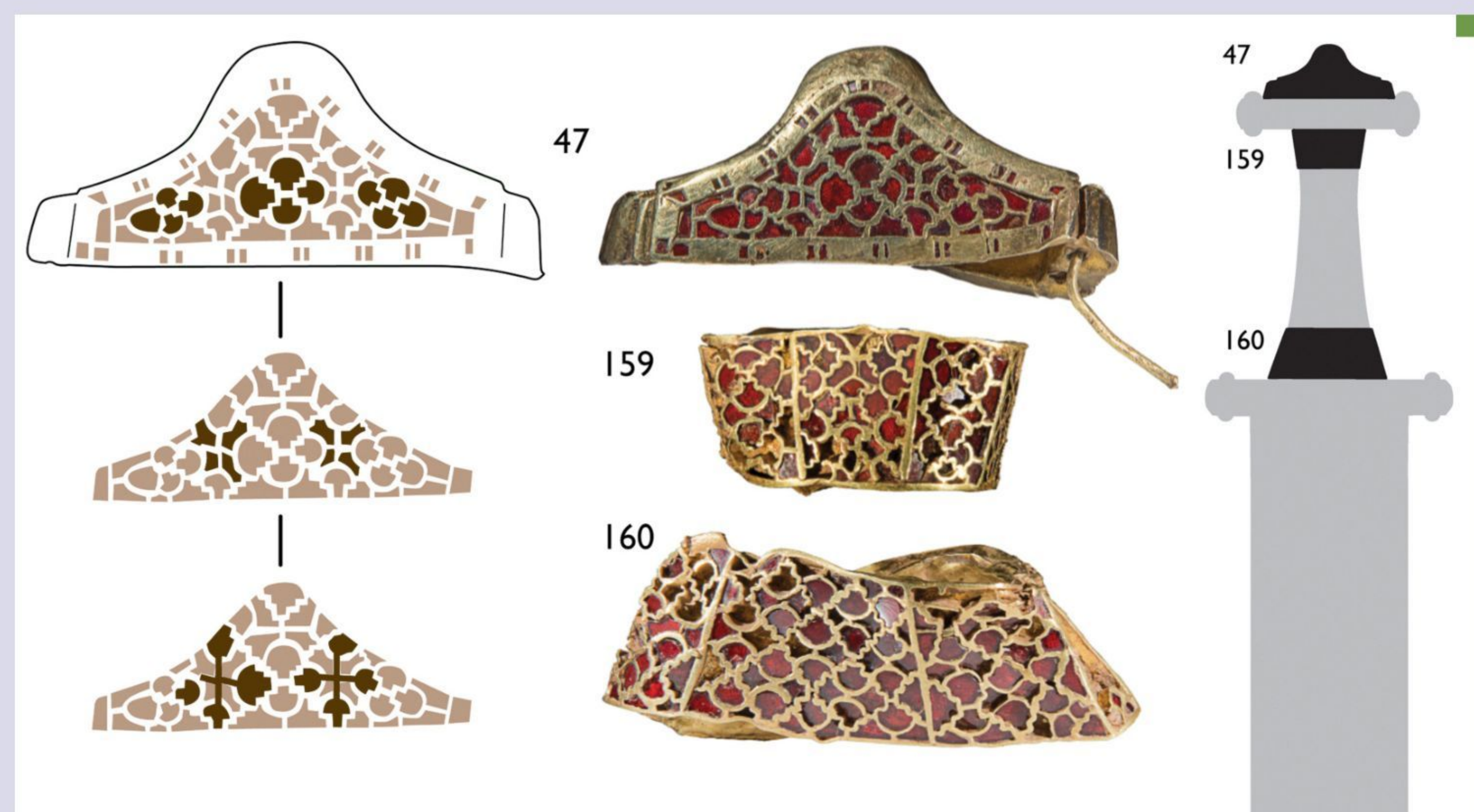
The latest metalwork is in a different aesthetic, as well as presenting some unusual object forms, coined the Early Insular style (Phase 4, around 630–660). Due to the mix of cultural elements it shows, it is thought that it probably came from a region receptive to both Anglo-Saxon and British influences. The pommels, hilt-collars and other fittings are mainly of cast silver but with gold mounts added, often only on one side, by comparison suggesting a more sparing use of the precious metal.



*The author's Anglo-Saxon “early” and “late” Style II; Staffordshire Hoard designs are in the centre row, note the identical creature on the great cross and from Sutton Hoo (not to scale)*



*The author's overlapping chronological phases for objects in the Staffordshire Hoard (all dates approximate)*



*Pommel (47) and pair of collars (159–60) from a sword hilt, representing a gold and garnet cloisonné style that is well paralleled by metalwork from the kingdom of East Anglia; the drawing on the left shows three forms of hidden cross on the pommel (4.5cm across)*





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**Right: One of a pair of eye-shaped mounts in gold and garnet cloisonné; it shares its pattern of hidden crosses with pommel 47 (7.5cm across)**

Indeed, the metalwork phases appear to reflect to an extent the metal economy of the time: the earliest and latest objects are mainly silver, while the two middle phases representing the bulk of the collection are mainly of gold. The date range of hoard Phases

2–3 coincides with a sudden increase in the flow of gold to England that seems to have lasted less than half a century, before and after which silver metalworking dominated. So, in a sense, the hoard also shows us a “golden age” in real terms.



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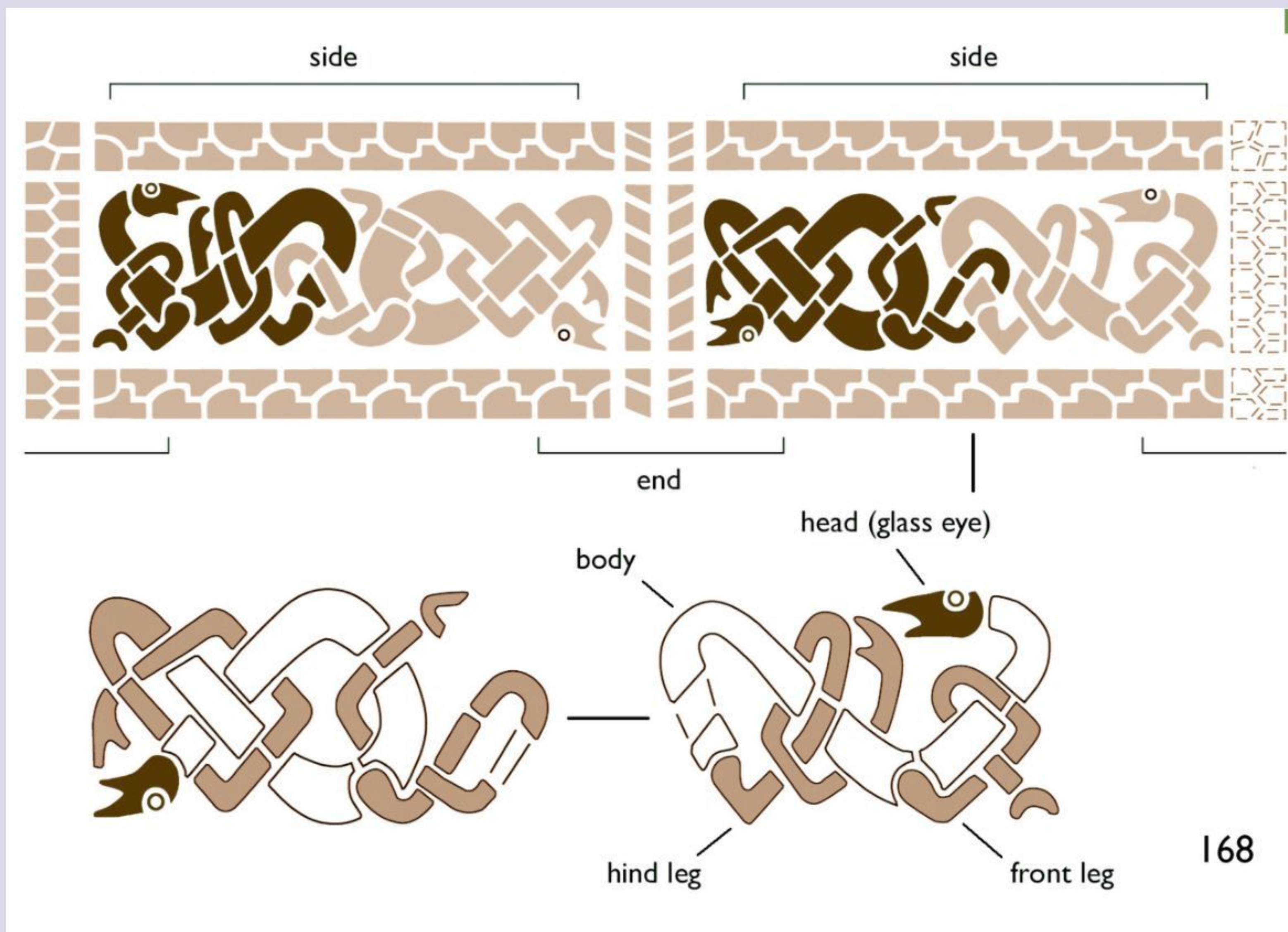


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**Above: Gold and garnet fittings from a seax fighting-knife handle, reconstructed on right**



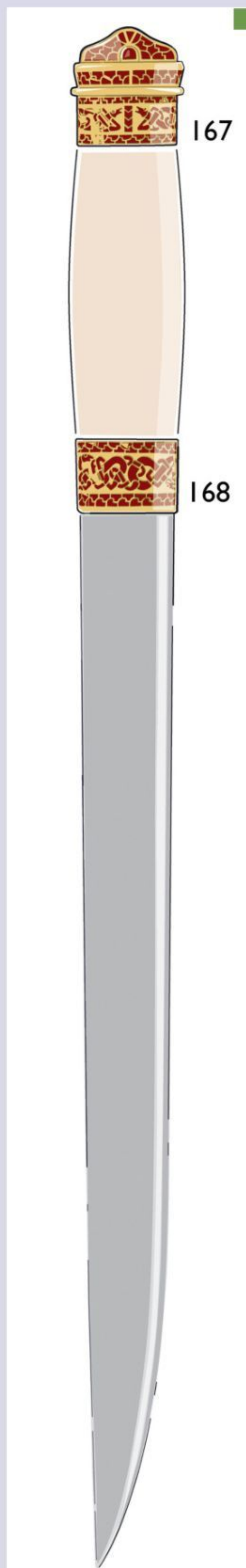
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**Above: The animal art of the seax**

## Pagan & Christian

The animal art is also an important, if poorly understood, source for the intellectual vigour of England prior to the introduction of literacy at the conversion from AD597. The repetition of forms and motifs seen in the art of the fifth to seventh centuries suggests a structured system that was very probably related to Germanic pre-Christian belief. The images could have pertained to oral mythologies now largely lost, though modern attempts to “read” them are rarely wholly convincing. On show in the hoard is some of the finest Style II from anywhere in Europe. For instance, the “decoded” bands of animal art on the helmet cheekpieces (see page 36) display a rare diversity and fluency, with parts of birds, quadrupeds and serpents combined to form hybrid creatures. An example in early Style II is the filigree hilt-collar (page 36), which contains numerous zoomorphs that at first appear hidden to the uneducated eye.

Concealed crosses are found on many objects, often combined with animal Style II, a reminder that the hoard metalwork was manufactured in a period of religious transition. The mixing of animal and Christian art, it is argued, indicates a syncretism (the combining of symbols or practices of belief systems) that is also seen in other sources. In a well-known







**Left: The great gold cross as it might have looked (30cm tall)**

**Above: The folded cross with its detached settings**

account in Bede's history, we are told with disapproval that King Rædwald of East Anglia (died 624) set up altars both to "devils" (ie non-Christian gods) and Christ. The same king is considered by many the most likely individual to have been buried in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo.

Manufactured before AD650, the

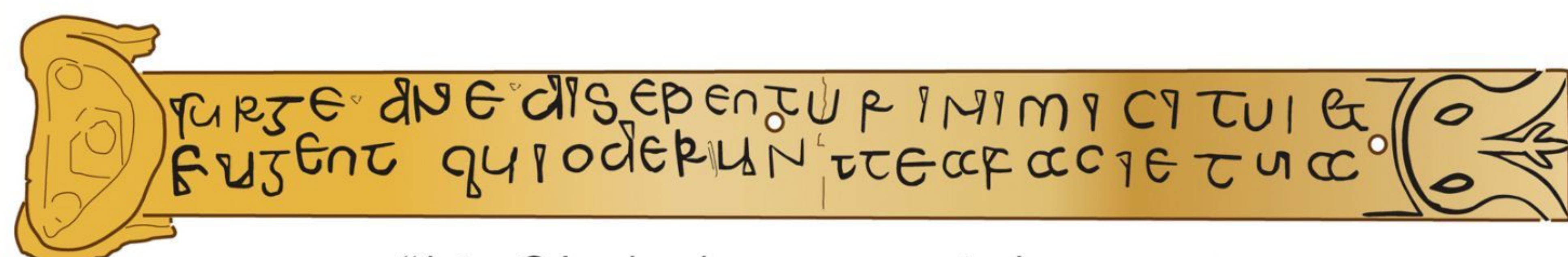
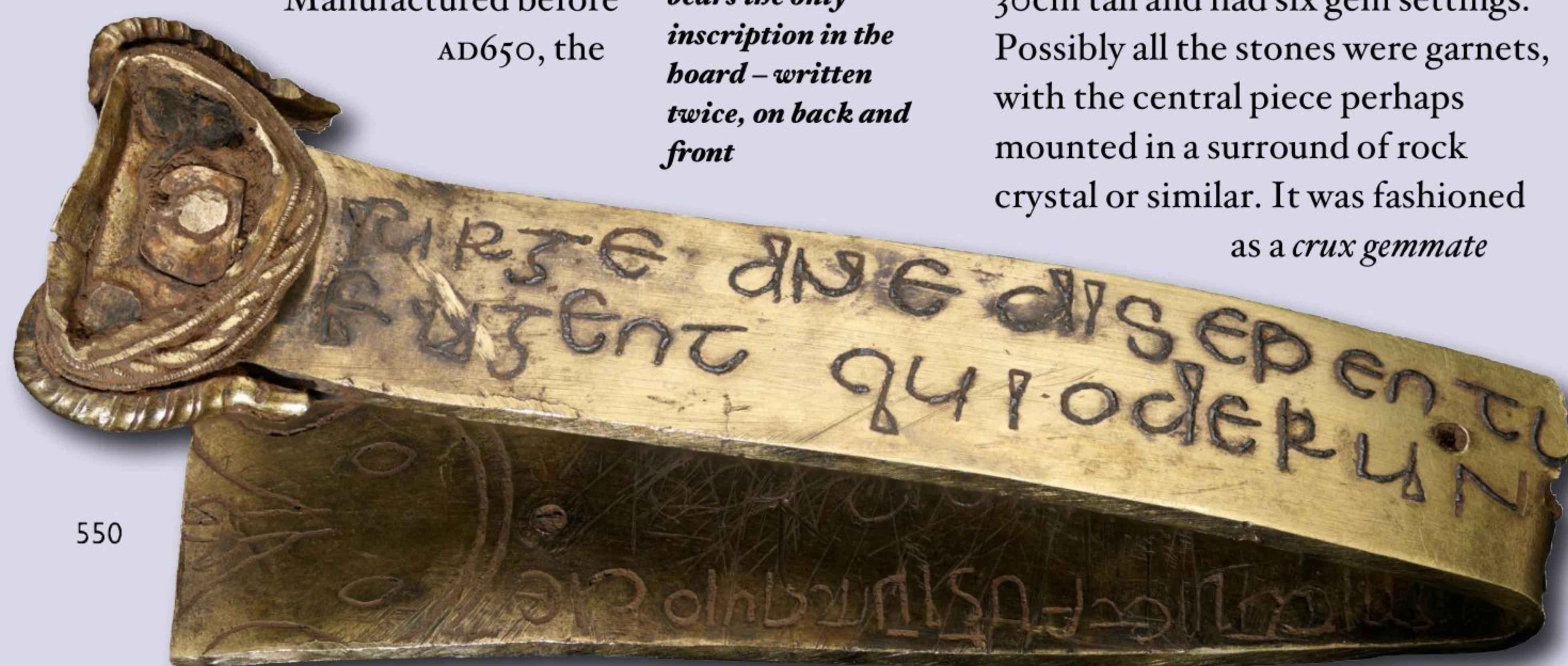
**Below: A gold strip bears the only inscription in the hoard – written twice, on back and front**

great gold cross is a bold statement of the royal patronage invested in the new Christian institutions. It had been broken up with its detached parts parcelled in its folded arms, but the mount, formed out of a double thickness of gold sheet, would originally have stood about 30cm tall and had six gem settings. Possibly all the stones were garnets, with the central piece perhaps mounted in a surround of rock crystal or similar. It was fashioned as a *crux gemmate*

("jewelled cross"), in the late Roman and Byzantine tradition, and it could have had dual purpose as an altar cross and a processional cross (ie a battle standard).

The five blood-red stones would have symbolised the wounds of Christ, while the D-shaped stone at the base can be understood as the mound of Golgotha. However, the covering, incised animal art and the pairs of ears at the ends of the arms are a legacy of Germanic "pagan" culture, and thus the cross too may be considered of syncretic character. Its immediate context, amid so much war gear, corroborates moreover that for the Anglo-Saxons the cross was first and foremost a symbol of victory, just as it had supposedly first appeared to the emperor Constantine in a vision as a portent of success before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD312.

It is now considered most likely that a gold strip inscribed with Latin text from the Old Testament (*Numbers* 10.35) is contemporary with the great cross. Possibly it is an arm from another cross, the belligerent words inlaid with black niello appealing for God's violence upon enemies.



"Arise, O Lord, and may your enemies be torn apart and those who hate you will flee from your face"

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Sutton Hoo

*Left: Shoulder clasps from the ship-burial mound at Sutton Hoo; this and the seax fittings in the Staffordshire Hoard could have been made in the same East Anglian workshop*

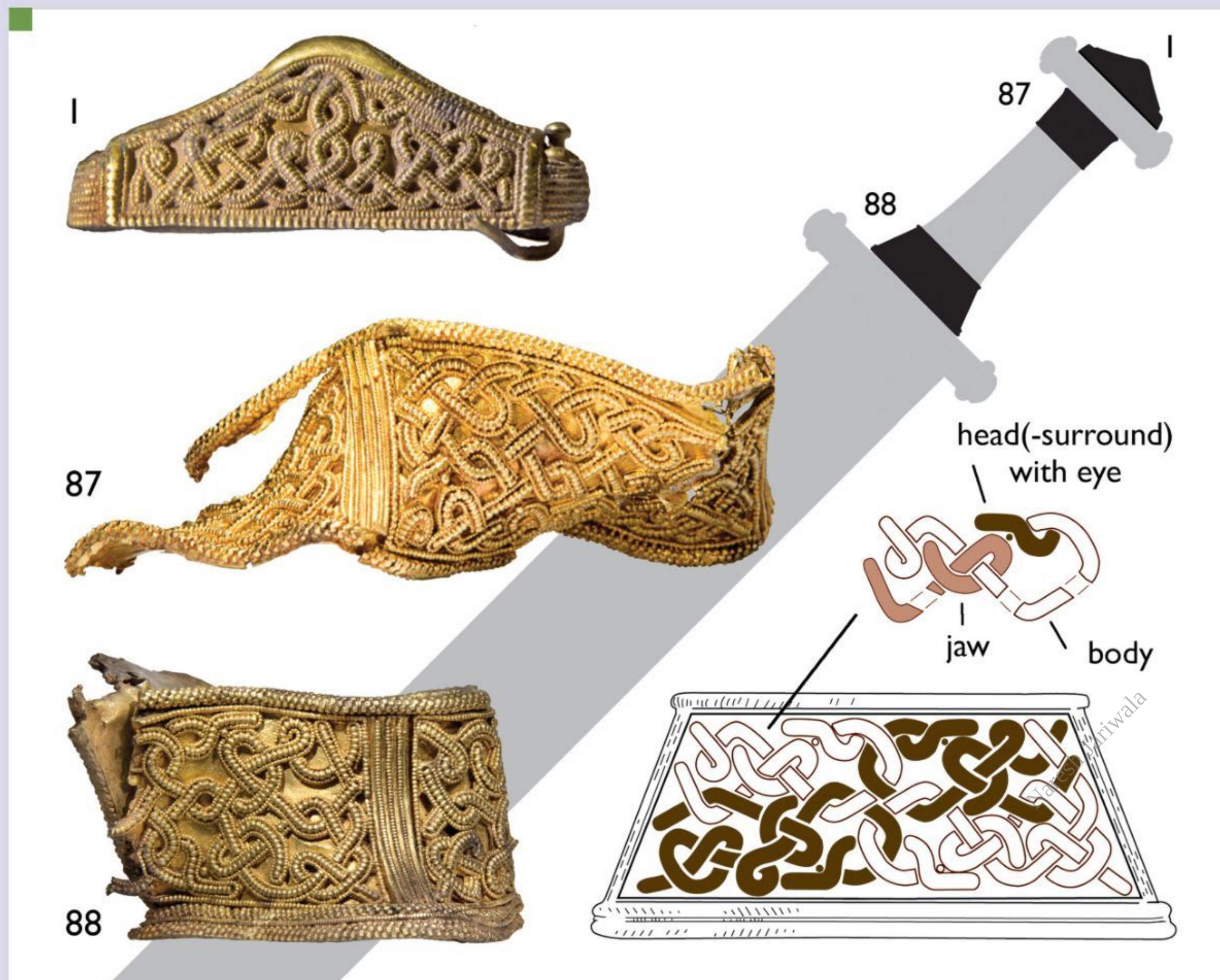
*Right: The reconstructed helmet on the cover of British Archaeology*

## Royal treasure

As already shown for the gold and garnet seax fittings, certain items stand out even against the exceptional background of the hoard. Arguably, the now reconstructed helmet is chief among them, the grandest of its type (despite that it was in over 1,000 fragments) and possibly the equivalent of a crown (see feature Jan/Feb 2019/164). The warrior ornament that covered the cap can be interpreted as an army in microcosm: marching aristocratic warriors are shown above a procession of lesser rank-and-file, and uppermost is a war leader on horseback. It is a statement that the army was the king's to command, and success for a kingdom depended on it.



*Left: Suite of a pommel and pair of collars from a sword hilt, representing a popular style in the collection with gold filigree wire and granular ornament; the drawing shows how patterns hide strange "zoomorph" creatures (Style II) in complex interlace (pommel 4.5cm across)*

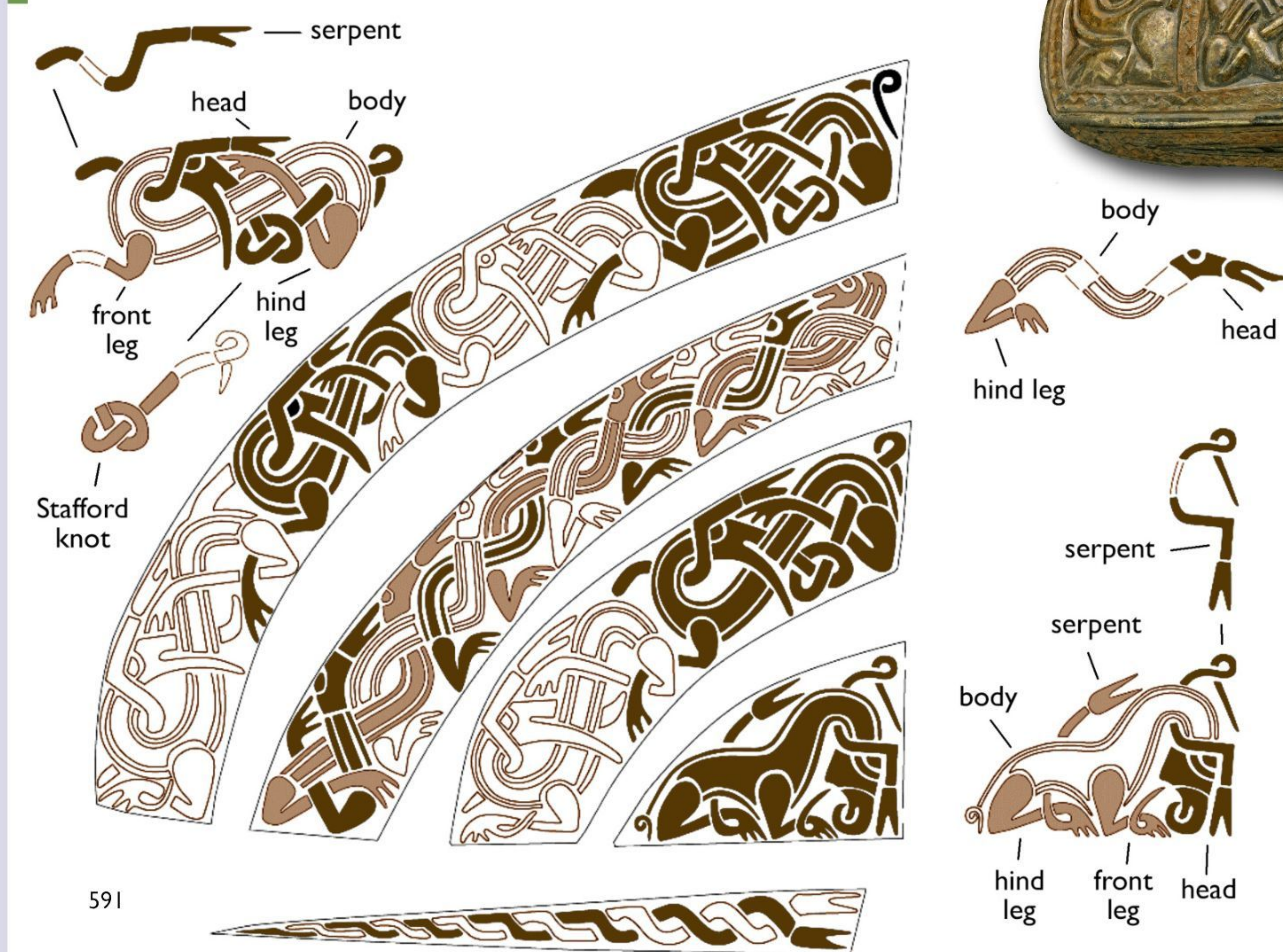


*Above: One of the pair of helmet cheekpieces in silver-gilt with animal Style II (8.5cm across)*

*Left: The cheekpiece's animal art decoded by the author*

Bede's history records the deaths of multiple rulers in battle, not least three from the kingdom of East Anglia and two from Northumbria, all killed by Penda of Mercia (reigned 626/633–655).

The hoard also contains over 20 large mounts in garnet cloisonné forming multiple sets, one of which has been interpreted as possible decoration for a saddle. Inlaid along the strip-mounts were gold panels with serpents, their bodies knotted in interlace – small, nested vipers







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ready to strike for the protection of the rider. It was no ordinary saddle and again might have had a princely owner. The large mount of a fish between birds might also have been set on the front board of a similarly lavish saddle. In the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*, king Hrothgar gives Beowulf many gifts for his heroism, including 12 horses, on one of which was set the king's richly wrought war seat (ie saddle) from which he gave battle. Such saddles, therefore, could have been the further equipment of rulers who fought mounted.

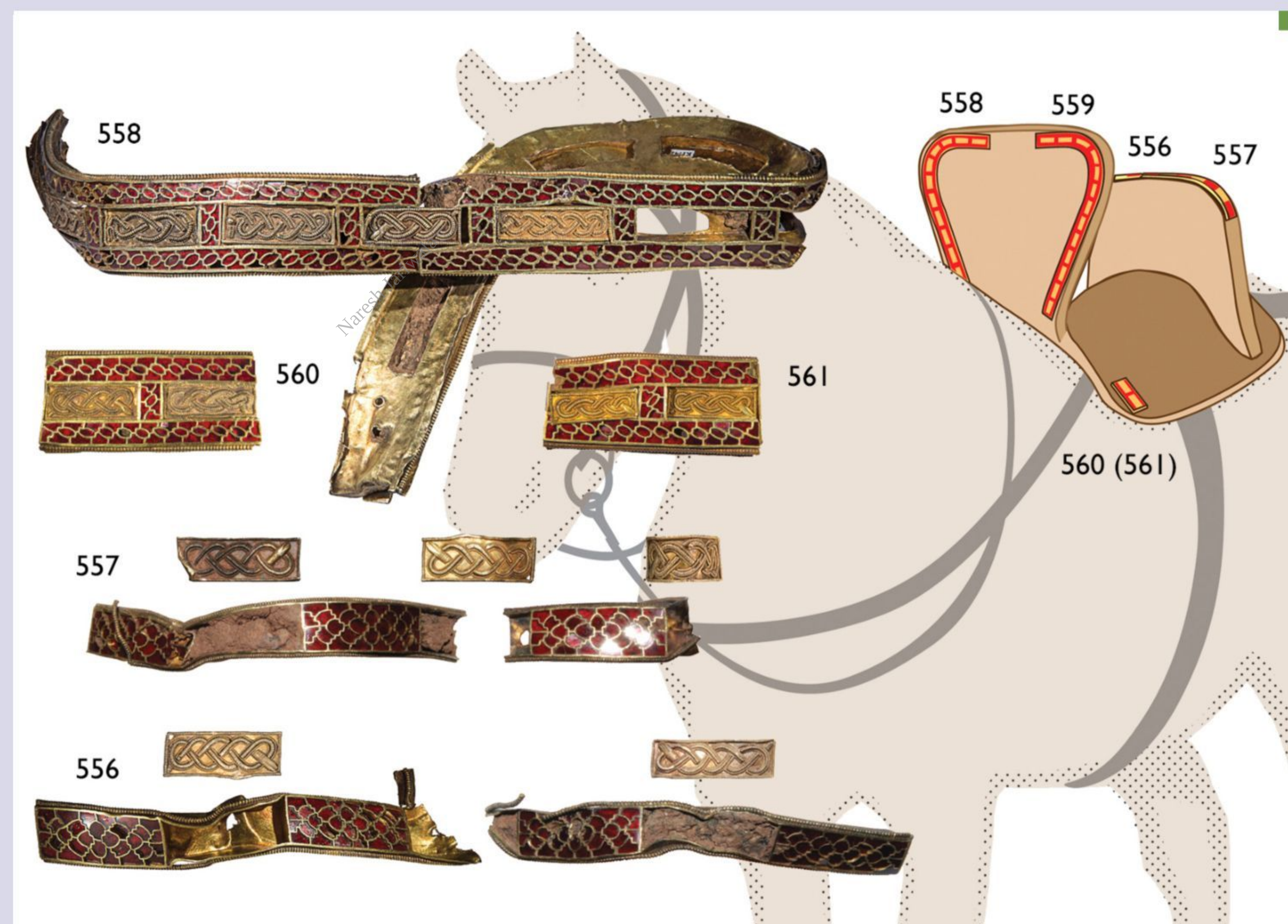
The question of how the broken, cut and bent parts of the collection relate to the history of seventh-century England is key. The dismantled fittings were certainly not intended for reuse, so it seems most likely the collection was either destined for melting down and recycling – but due to some unknown event was hidden and then lost – or was committed to the earth intentionally, perhaps as a funerary offering or gift to gods. Which scenario is correct is impossible to know, but regardless these relics of elite warrior society must have played a part in the violent ferment out of which the kingdom of Mercia emerged, thanks largely to the achievements of King Penda.

We can equally only speculate about who might have owned and buried the treasure, but a figure of power surely. The dating of the bulk of the collection indicates manufacture and use in the first half of the seventh century, though the heavy wear on the earlier material suggests the majority might have been collected together in the century's second quarter. This chronology demonstrates a remarkable coincidence with the years of Penda's reign. It seems beyond chance too that much of the metalwork shows links to East Anglia

*Above: Torn plaque of a fish between birds of prey, possibly a mount from the front of a royal parade saddle (12cm across)*

and possibly Northumbria, the kingdoms against which Mercia long battled and was on multiple occasions victorious. The movement and clashing of armies across middle England provides an appealing model for how so much war gear could have come to rest in one location, a setting at the very edge of the Anglo-Saxon dominion, but which apart from the hoard indicates relatively little

of the Winwæd in 655, and his son was murdered a year later during an ensuing short period of Northumbrian domination. Another son, Wulfhere, reasserted Mercian power in the 660s but he led an army to another defeat to Northumbria in 674. Other accounts concerning Mercia record payments of treasure, or the taking of booty during raiding. An argument could be made for each episode, but regrettably our sparse historical sources do not allow us any surety. Far from diminishing the hoard's interest, however, this uncertainty only increases the appeal of its mystery, of a find without parallel, a treasure of warriors and kings.



*Above: Gold and garnet mounts with filigree serpents (Style II), interpreted by the author as saddle fittings*

evidence of local elite metalworking. Nevertheless, the chosen burial site appears strategic, situated in a landscape that would soon become the Mercian royal heartland, close to the future palace site of Tamworth and bishopric of Lichfield, and beside the major routeway of Watling Street.

Based on the proposed dating of the latest metalwork (of Phase 4), the hoard was probably buried around 650–675, a turbulent time for the Mercian kingdom and its ruling dynasty. Penda was killed at the Battle

*Chris Fern was the academic lead for the Staffordshire Hoard Project (Historic England no 5892) and is a research associate of the University of York. The Staffordshire Hoard is owned by Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils, and is cared for on behalf of the nation by Birmingham Museums Trust and the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery. All drawings and reconstructions are by the author. See The Staffordshire Hoard: An Anglo-Saxon Treasure, ed C Fern, T Dickinson & L Webster (Society of Antiquaries 2019)*

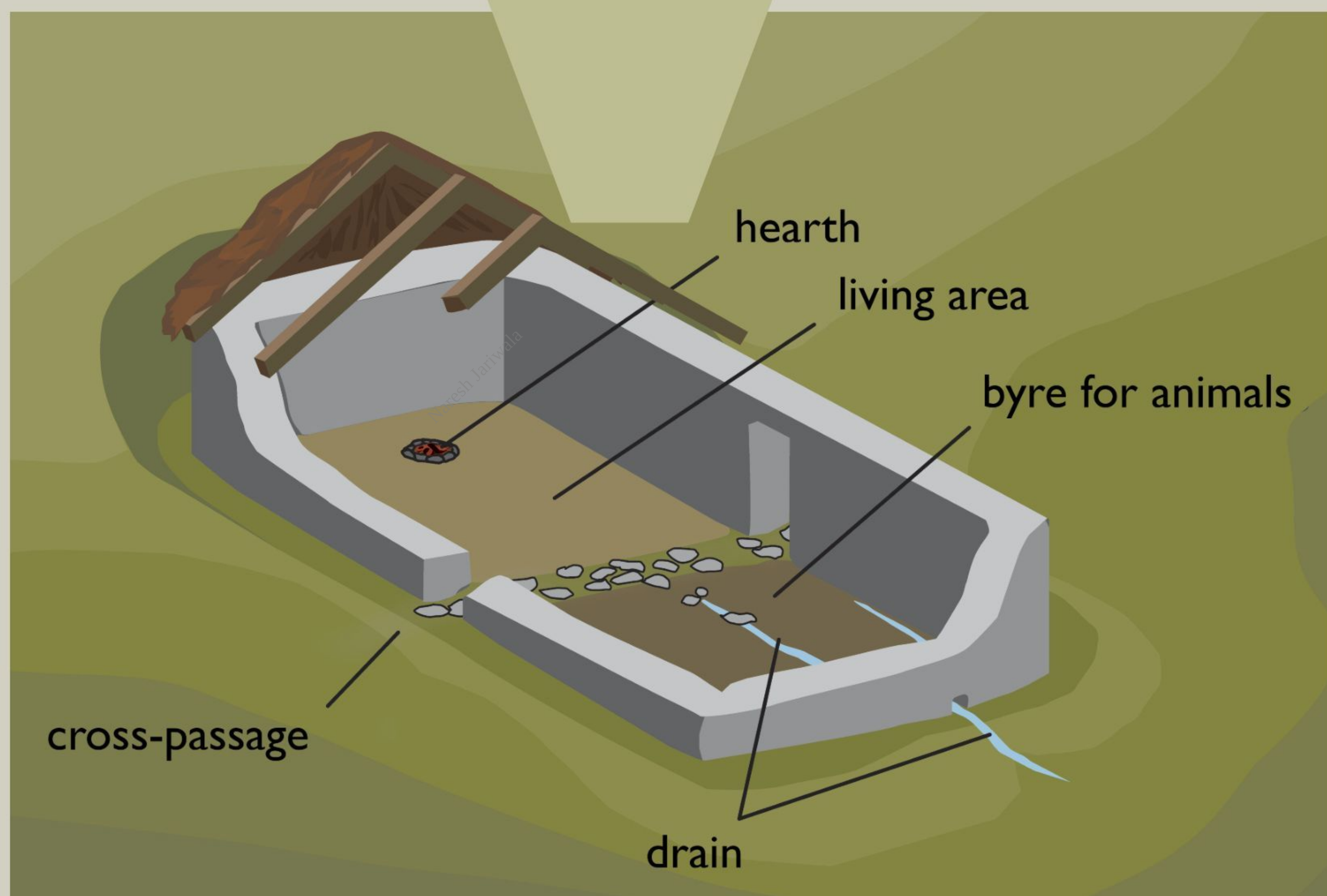


# Who built longhouses in the Duddon



They went looking for Vikings and found late medieval houses – one of which had been raised on a Bronze Age platform. Peter Matthiessen reports on the DuddonDig community project

# Duddon Valley?



It's a truism that archaeological digs usually encounter the unexpected, and this community project is typical. For some years, the Duddon Valley Local History Group (DVLHG) had been surveying stone structures on the Cumbrian fells in what is now part of the Lake District World Heritage Site. We had catalogued a huge number and variety of sites, ranging from megaliths and Bronze Age ring cairns to post-medieval charcoal pit-steads.

Some of the most intriguing finds were the footings and low walls of scattered rectangular drystone

buildings presumed to be of medieval origin; we imagined (rather fancifully as it turned out) that these might have been dwellings built by the early Norse settlers of the area around AD750–900. No Norse settlements had been found in Cumbria, despite the prevalence of Scandinavian placenames and Viking hoards, but the Duddon Valley structures appeared to be longhouses introduced by the Norse. The ensuing community-led DuddonDig project excavated three of these structures near Seathwaite Tarn between 2016 and 2018. It was primarily an attempt to obtain dating evidence, and

*Above: Schematic illustration of a longhouse*

information about the lifestyles of the inhabitants. There were several surprises awaiting our keen volunteers.

DuddonDig was run by DVLHG and funded from many sources (most notably the Heritage Lottery Fund). Over 100 enthusiastic volunteers took part, most of whom were trained by Oxford Archaeology North, the professional company engaged to provide expert guidance to the project. A level archaeology students from Greenfield College, Huddersfield also joined in. An important element of the project was that 385 year 5 and 6 children from six local primary schools



were closely involved. Through theoretical and practical lessons in school, they learned about basic archaeological methods such as excavation, planning and reconstruction of finds, and they then subsequently visited the actual digs. We created a timeline for the 1km walk to the sites, whereby each metre of the walk was equivalent to moving back one year. Boards every 50 years highlighted local and national events of that time. On site, the children used planning frames to record parts of the excavated walls, and also excavated small test pits. The involvement of local people was a great success, as many had strong connections to the valley. Some may even have been descendants of the people who built the structures they helped to excavate.

## Surveys

The chosen sites (Long House Close and Tongue House Close A and B) were located near current farms of similar name which existed by the 17th century, and were linked to them by a network of drystone walls and small irregular fields or in-byes. There are few historical records associated with this part of the Duddon Valley, but it is known the land had been used in medieval times for hunting deer and also for sheep pasture. There is also some evidence of assarting by around 1300, which entailed clearing forest for agriculture. Evidence for later medieval farming can be seen on the sides of the valley at 200–300m above sea level, and the practice of transhumance and living part of the year in shielings (seasonally occupied dwellings) was operating. The population declined, however, during the 14th century, as a result of the Black Death, poor harvests and animal plagues.

Pre-excavation resistivity and magnetometry surveys were inconclusive. However, topography and photogrammetry surveys confirmed that a two-celled stone-walled rectangular building existed at Tongue House A, with indications of a cross-passage. It was also evident that the building was within a small enclosure that had an entrance on its south-western side, directly opposite the entrance into the building. This enclosure, in turn, seemed to be linked to a series of walls that formed a

fragmentary field system.

There was another stone-walled rectangular building, of similar dimensions to Tongue House A, at Tongue House B, but in this case with no visible internal dividing wall. There was a centrally positioned entrance, however, in the western wall, and the southern gable wall had a prominent kerbed foundation.

At Long House Close, the survey identified several structures. There was a stone-walled rectangular building of near-identical size to those at

accommodation for a few livestock.

## Tongue House

Excavation at Tongue House A largely confirmed the results of the surface survey. The earliest remains consisted of a rectangular building that did indeed comprise two cells separated by a cross-passage, the larger cell measuring 4.5m by 4m, and the smaller 4m by 2.5m. The excavation also confirmed that the northern end of the cross-passage had subsequently been blocked. Some important additional



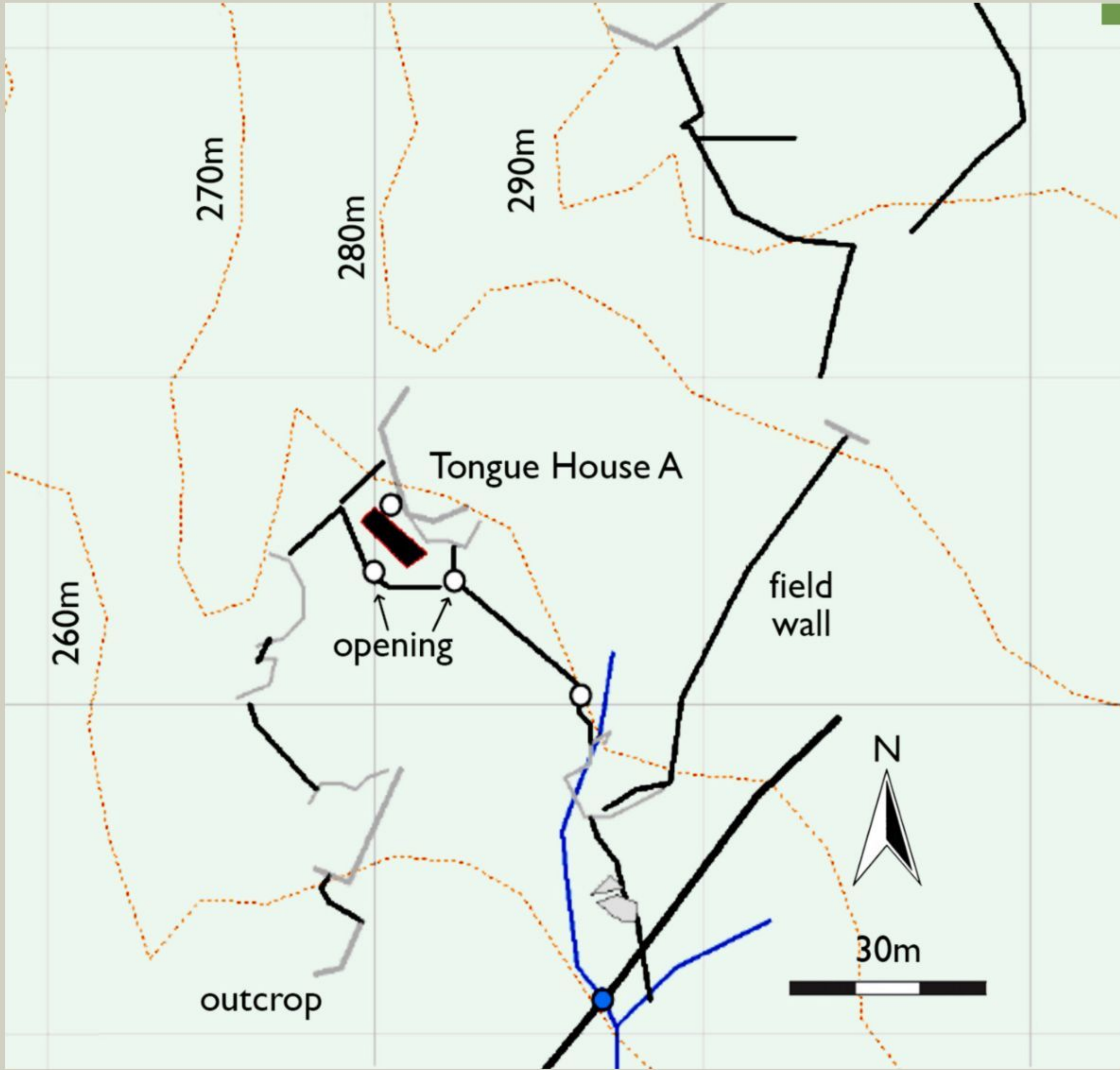
*Above: School children learning how to excavate a test pit*

Tongue House A and B. This also had two cells, which were perhaps separated by a cross-passage. Intriguingly, one end of the building was set closely within a U-shaped wall, which seemed to define a “pound” (stock enclosure) at its eastern end. The terminals of this U-shaped structure corresponded to the line of the cross-passage within the rectangular building. The pound was, in turn, linked to a larger irregular-shaped stonewalled enclosure, which had been overlain by a boundary wall at a later date. This enclosure also seemed to link with two other stone-walled buildings. One of these, just to the north-west of the rectangular building, also had a rectangular plan (9.1m by 6m); following its abandonment, a shepherd’s bield (shelter) had been erected over the remains. The other potential building had an irregular, almost pentagonal plan (maximum dimensions 8.6m by 7.3m), and might have been a store or winter

evidence concerning the construction, form, and date of this building was revealed. It was apparent that walls, constructed using a drystone technique, generally had no foundations, the site having first been stripped of turf, levelled in places, and the walls then built directly onto the natural geology. It was also evident that the interior of the larger cell, and also the cross-passage, contained two successive cobble floors. A fragment of alder/hazel charcoal from the lower floor in the larger cell was radiocarbon dated to AD1510–1800 (95% chance). There is a 91.4% chance that the date falls between 1510–1670, suggesting that the building was probably constructed in the 16th or 17th century.

A hearth was revealed at the south-eastern end of the larger cell, close to the cross-passage. This was associated with the later floor and was defined by a large flat stone slab, a lack of charcoal probably indicating that peat was used





*Left: At Tongue House A a rectangular building lies inside a small enclosure linked to a fragmentary field system*

levelling layers contained a fragment of charcoal, which produced a radiocarbon date of AD1470–1640, suggesting that the building had been constructed in this period. Other evidence uncovered during the excavation related to the building's form and construction. From this it was apparent that its entrance was through its western side wall, marked by two square jambs spaced 2.5m apart. At a later date, however, this entrance had been partially blocked, to create a narrower doorway, 1m wide, marked by a threshold stone.

Pollen from upper peat cores at the Tongue House B site suggests that, contemporary with the construction of the building, peat was being cut in this area, after which it gradually started to regenerate. One possibility is that the peat was cut for use as fuel, which lends further support for the site's use and occupation in late medieval/early post-medieval times.

as fuel. A probable hearth was also discovered in the smaller cell, defined by a semi-circular arrangement of stones, along with a small rectangular stone structure that probably functioned as a store for peat. The presence of hearths within both of the cells indicates that both rooms were associated with domestic activities.

At Tongue House B, excavation again largely confirmed the results of the topographical survey, indicating that the principal remains comprised a single-roomed rectangular building, 11.6m long by 4m wide. As at Tongue House A, it appears that, immediately prior to construction, the site was stripped of turf and levelled in places. After this, the drystone walls were built directly onto the exposed ground surface. Importantly, one of the



*Above: Pre-excavation survey of Tongue House A*

## Long House Close

At Long House Close, the excavations produced the project's most complex, and unexpected, evidence. The main surprise was that this site was first occupied in prehistory, with the earliest remains being radiocarbon dated to 1430–1280BC, in the Middle Bronze Age. A terraced platform had been created at that time, measuring some 11m by 13m, revetted with a stone kerb. The platform was composed of a series of stone surfaces and soil layers, which contained a few fragments of Bronze Age pottery and a flint flake, and were associated with several other



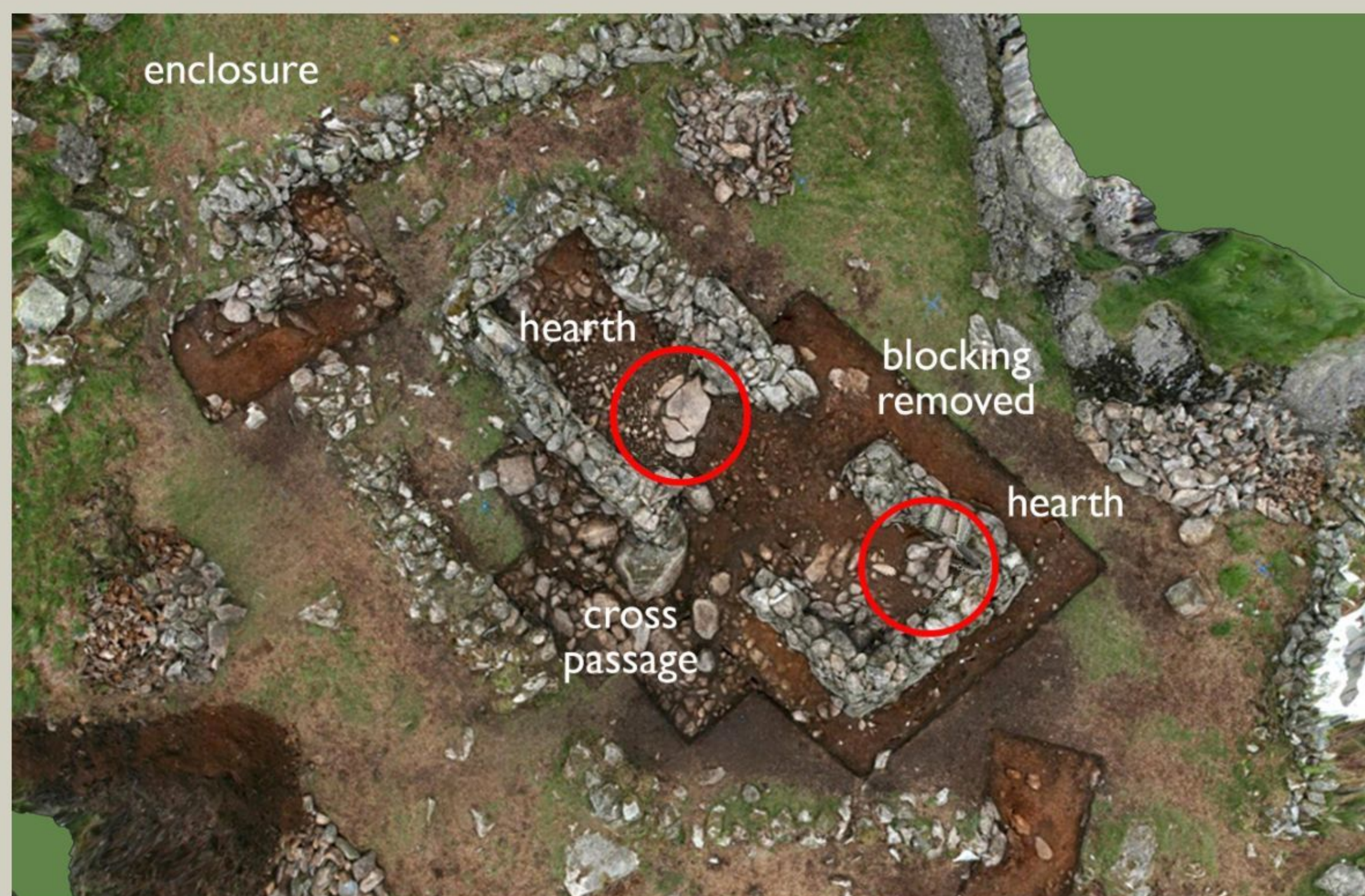
*Left: Excavating Tongue House A*



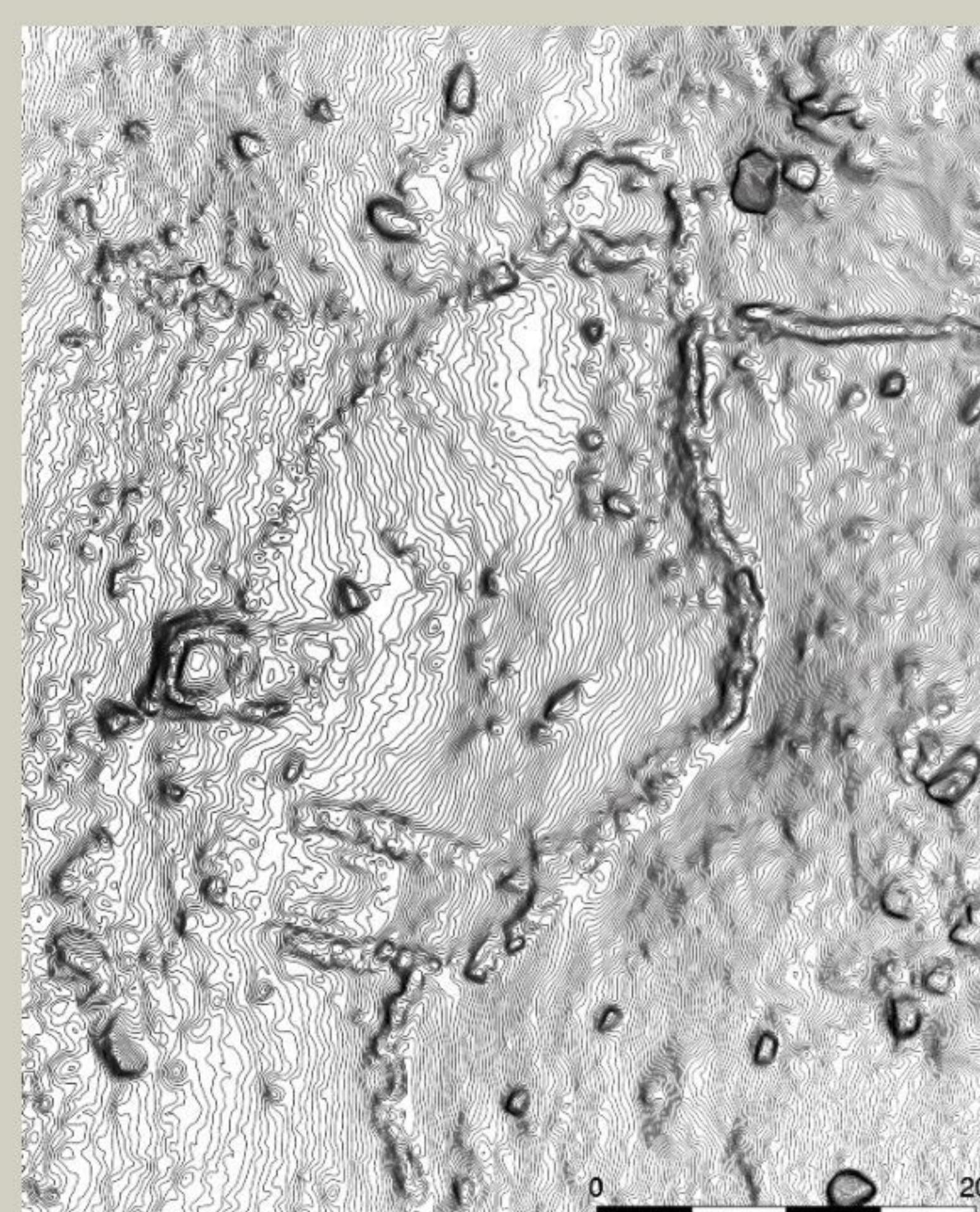
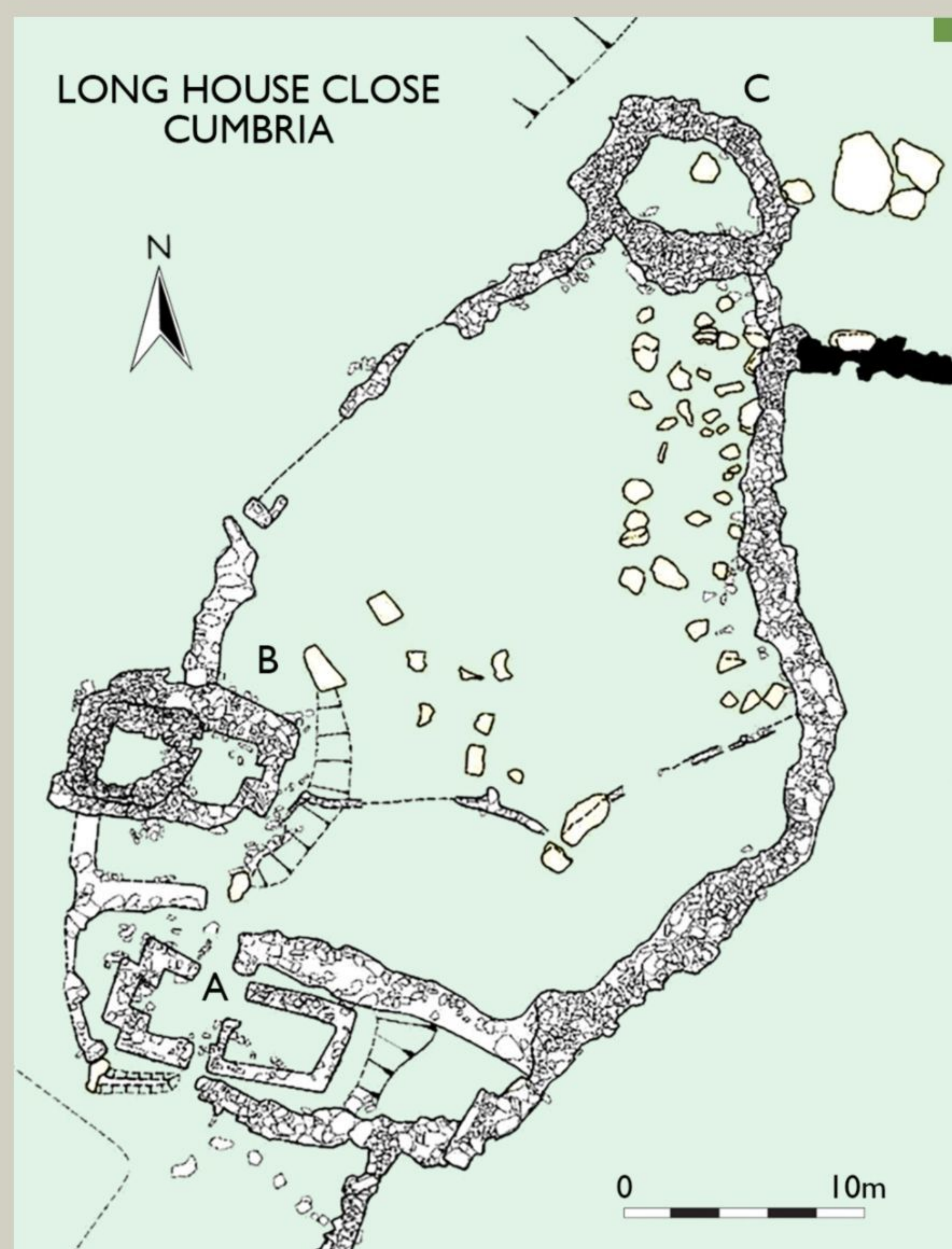
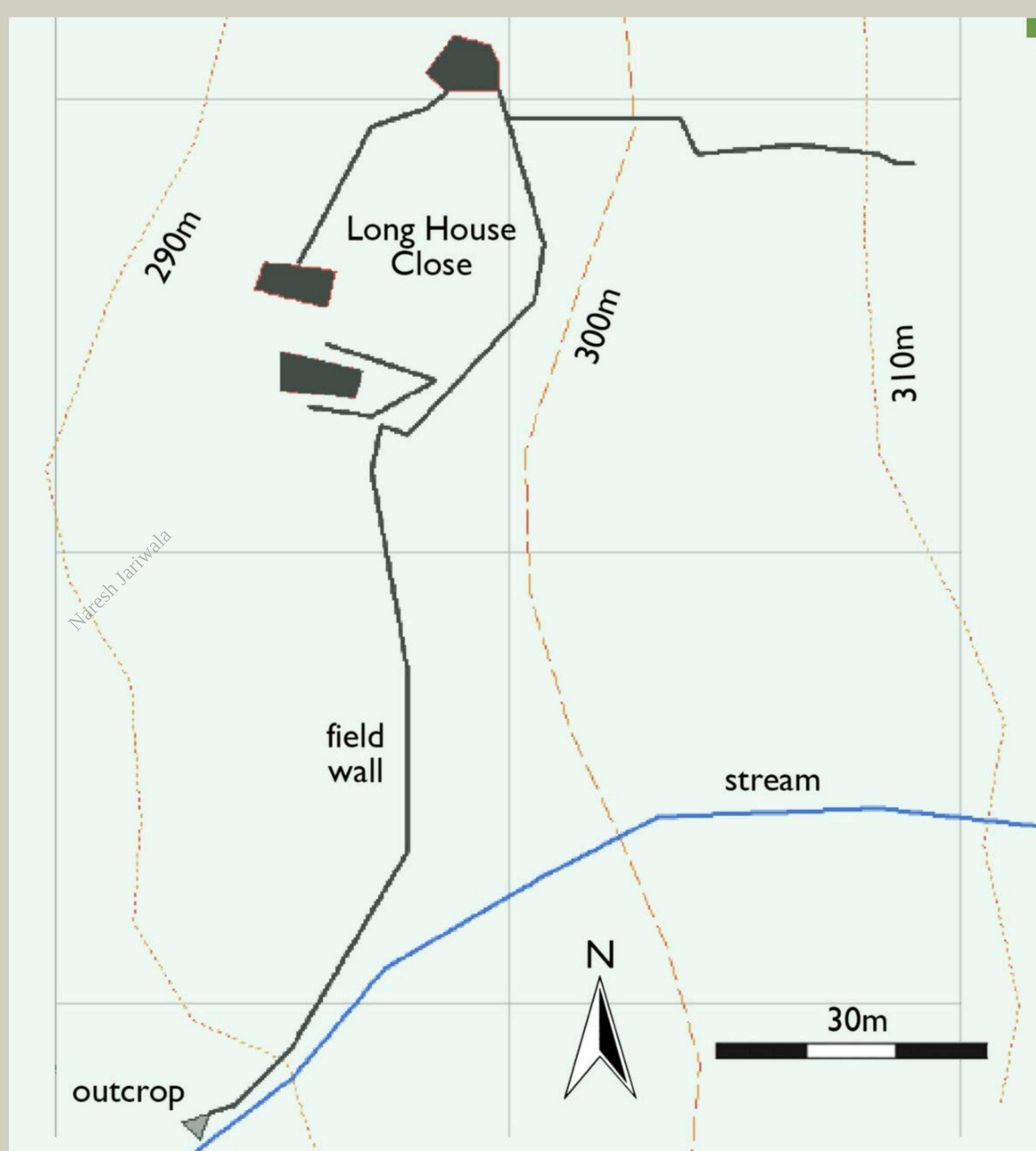
features. These included an enigmatic L-shaped arrangement of stones and an upright stone setting, two possible hearths, a pit, and a stakehole.

The excavations indicated that the drystone-walled rectangular building was built directly onto this earlier platform, taking advantage of the levelled area. The building proved to be 9.4m by 4.5m, and contained two cells, separated by a cross-passage, with the larger cell lying in the eastern part of the building. The cross-passage was partially defined by a length of walling, which also partly defined the western side of the larger cell, which seems to have had a doorway at its north-western corner. The smaller, western cell contained a rough flagstone floor, and, significantly, this

**Right: A photogrammetric model of Tongue House A shows the locations of two hearths and a blocked cross-passage**



**Right: The Long House Close connects with field walls**



**Above: At Long House Close a two-celled rectangular building (A) lies inside a small enclosure, linked to a larger enclosure with two other stone-walled buildings, rectangular (B, overlain by a shepherd's shelter) and pentagonal (C)**

**Left: Contour plan of Long House Close generated from lidar data**

sealed a soil which contained two iron objects, fired clay and charcoal fragments. One of these charcoal fragments was radiocarbon dated to AD1480–1650, similar in date to the building at Tongue House B. No flooring was present in the larger, eastern cell, though this did contain a large flat stone at its western end. This was probably a hearth and indicates that it was used as a domestic area.

We found a few fragments of pottery that seemed to be contemporary with the Long House Close building, including two sherds dating to the 15th–17th centuries.

These comprise a base and part of a rim, both possibly from a jug, and are of a type known as Silverdale Ware, after the village in north Lancashire where kilns producing this style of pottery have been recorded.

A pit just outside the building, close to its north-western corner, contained charcoal that when radiocarbon dated provided a very tight date range of AD1410–1460. No clear link existed between this pit and the building, though, so it cannot be certain if this material relates to the first use of the building, or immediately preceded its construction.



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*Above: Aerial photo of Long House Close in first year of excavation, looking south; a putative longhouse structure (centre) is partly surrounded by large walls, and the edge of a revetted Bronze Age platform to right (west) is not yet visible*



*Left: Remains of revetment around the outer edge of the Bronze Age platform*

The U-shaped enclosure around the building was also partly examined during the excavation. This is a curious feature, particularly as it is immediately adjacent to the building's side walls, leaving almost no space between. Additionally, the enclosure's north and south sections are of entirely different construction. If the building and enclosure were contemporary, access to the enclosed area (the pound) to the rear of the building would have been impossible from the west, meaning that it was effectively defunct. This seems to suggest that the building and enclosure were not in existence at the same time.

## Post-medieval farms

The archaeological data present an interesting insight into the early use of the upland areas to the east of the River Duddon. The earliest remains excavated by the project (the Long House Close platform) date to the Middle Bronze Age. This is roughly

contemporary with a nearby ring cairn excavated at Lead Pike in 2005–07. The platform probably relates to a particular type of prehistoric settlement that has been fairly widely recorded across the upland areas of northern Britain, including parts of the Lake District National Park, such as Heathwaite Fell east of

Duddon Valley.

This type of site is known as an “unenclosed platform settlement”, which typically consists of a terraced platform, sometimes revetted, created by quarrying into a slope to create a scarp edge, and then dumping the spoil in front of the scarp to build a circular or semi-circular apron, which functioned as the platform. This then acted as a base for one or more roundhouses, which are often defined by posts or ring-groove construction trenches. Although no definitive evidence for a timber house was discovered at Long House Close, the presence of hearths, a pit and a stakehole, and stone settings, seems to imply the existence of one or more domestic structures, though the remains of these have been largely obliterated by later activity.

At the start of the project, we anticipated that the three rectangular buildings might represent medieval longhouses. Radiocarbon dates obtained from the sites, however, suggest that all of the excavated buildings were established at the end of the medieval period or, more likely, in early post-medieval times. Furthermore, they do not conform to the strict definition of a longhouse as a building accommodating both people and animals: none possessed a byre, Tongue House A had hearths in both rooms, and Tongue House B had only a single room. It can instead be assumed that Tongue House A and Long House Close had a purely domestic function, as did the later manifestation of the building at Tongue House B. It is unclear, however, whether they were permanently occupied farmsteads, or

*Below: Looking down on Long House Close during excavation in 2018*







shielings associated with temporary occupation during the summer months by transhumant herdsman and their families. The fact that they were associated with enclosures and field systems suggests the former explanation is more likely.

In summary, this inspiring example of community-led archaeology has shed new light on how the Cumbrian uplands were settled in the past. Where the Norse incomers lived, however, remains an unanswered question.

**Above: Excavating through the floor of the medieval building at Long House Close to examine deposits in the Bronze Age platform**



**Above: Sherds of 15th-17th century Silverdale ware from the Long House Close building**

Peter Matthiessen is a project leader of the Duddon Valley Local History Group, receiving the British Association for Local History award for Personal Achievement in 2017. He thanks Mervyn Cooper, Stephe Cove, Ken Day, Eleanor Kingston, Jamie Lund, Sue Lydon, Rachel Newman and Jamie Quartermaine. See [www.duddonhistory.org.uk/duddon-dig](http://www.duddonhistory.org.uk/duddon-dig) and "A survey of longhouse structures in the Duddon Valley, Cumbria," by Matthiessen et al, Proceedings of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society 15 (2015), 7-138 ■

**Below: A page from the DuddonDig blog**

**Duddon Dig**  
The survey and excavation of three longhouses in the Duddon Valley

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## Day 15 – Let the Backfilling Commence

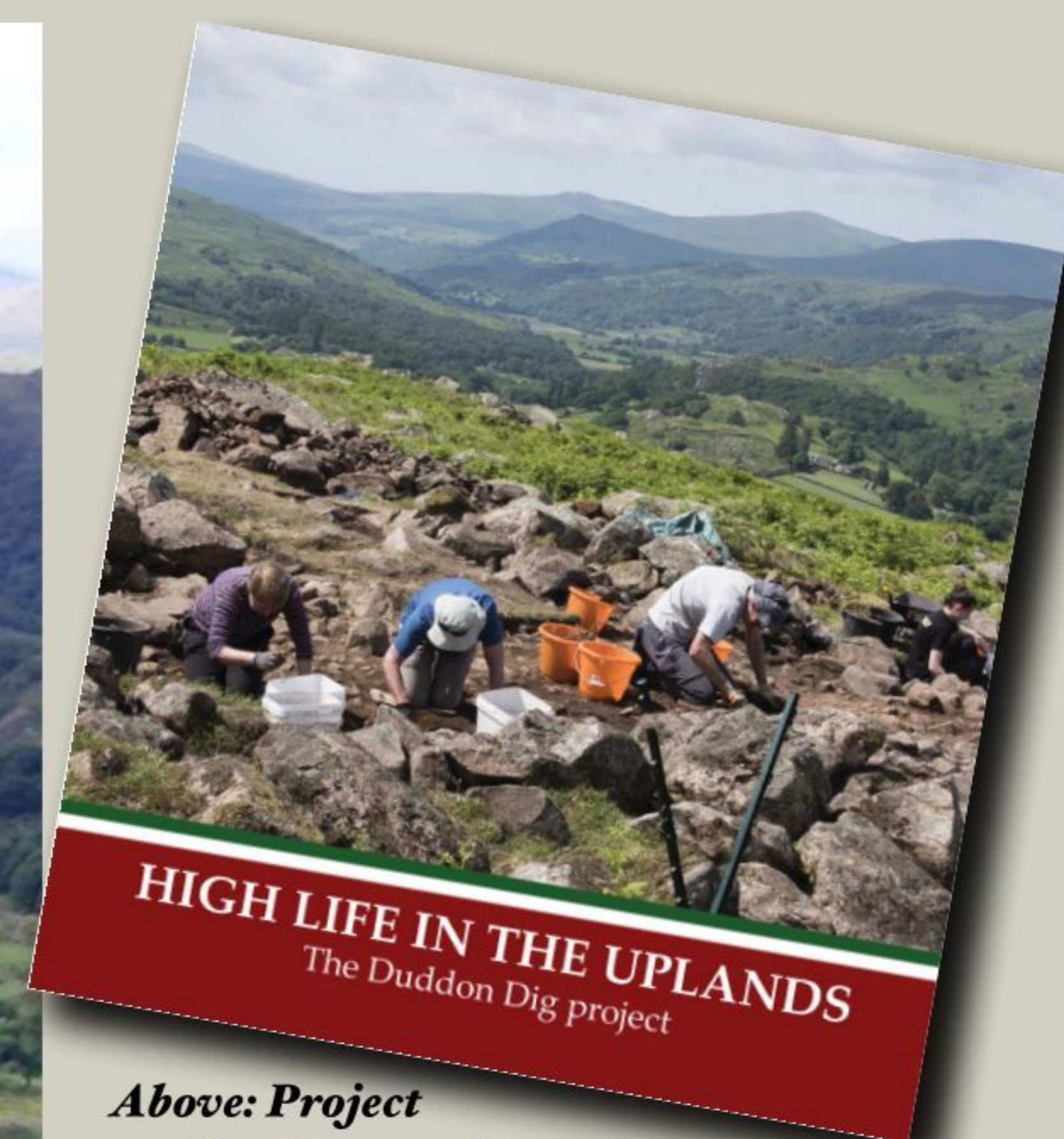
Posted on June 30, 2018 by oanorth

Well as the dig at Duddon nears its end the hard task of backfilling begins. It was great to see so many volunteers today giving up their spare time to help put Long House Close back to bed. It is hard to believe that it was only 2 weeks ago we were de-turfing. I do not think any of us could have guessed the scale of what we would uncover.

Everyone gathered round in this beautiful setting to hear Jeremy give his morning brief. For me it was a little sad as this was my last day at Duddon (and no it's not just to escape the last day of backfilling :-).

Jeremy has everyone's attention as he runs through what we know so far

Most of the volunteers today were involved in the task of preparing site for backfilling and re-turfing. Everyone who has been involved in this on previous years will know that this is no easy task. Many of the outer excavated areas were being filled in with stones in preparation for the soil to be replaced and re-turfed.



**Above: Project publications can be downloaded from the website**





# The greatest stories from the tiniest of objects

As the Thames slides eastwards from Tilbury it rounds a bleak, flat marshland, criss-crossed by wriggling creeks and drainage channels and dotted with low ruined buildings, the remains of a gunpowder and explosives works that closed in 1921. Somewhere in the estuary it merges imperceptibly with the North Sea, at a point that changes with the wind, weather and tides, when the balance tips and the water becomes more sea than river.

My friend James and I usually choose an early-morning tide for our visits here, and it's still dark when we meet far from the river. I jump into his car and we drive down winding empty roads, past sleeping houses and shadowy churches until we get to the first of a series of metal farm-gates that lead onto rough tracks and out to the tufted marsh meadows. Frogs jump in our headlights as we reach the bottom of a tall bank

**Over two centuries mudlarking on the Thames foreshore has risen from scavenging by some of London's poorest to a leisure activity that is amassing artefacts lost by the city's inhabitants. Lara Maiklem knows more about it than most**

where the marsh ends and the river starts, though it's still a good walk from here to where it is safest to step off the riverside onto the mud to begin our search.

After two hours it's time to go. Victorian bottles and stoneware pots are standing in the mud along our path back. I will probably leave them today.



I'm happy with the three barnacle-encrusted early free-blown wine bottles we found, a beautiful clay pipe with roses and thistles entwined around the bowl, and the lid of a Gosnell Brothers Cherry Tooth Paste pot. I look back over my shoulder, past James, along the winding path we've made in the mud to the river. The tide has turned behind our backs and the water is chasing us.

The river is a great khaki snake-dragon, smoothing and stroking its treasures, hiding them in its coils. Soon it will be rounding the bend and passing the dump at Tilbury, drawing over broken bottles and teapots. Moving inland, at Blackwall it will flow over the possessions dropped by pilgrims and adventurers before it loops its way around the Isle of Dogs to Greenwich to sort the remains of Tudor feasts for the next low tide. I watch it in my mind's eye, as it travels on past



Cuckold's Point and into the Pool, where it will play on the bones of abandoned warships and pluck nails from the mud as it journeys to Tower Bridge.

Now it makes its way through the city, past Trig Lane, where last week it handed me half the grizzled face of a beardy Bellarmine, and Queenhithe, where I collected a handful of perfectly preserved Georgian clay pipes, before it pushes west to swirl around the prehistoric timber remains at Vauxhall. At Hammersmith it will check its cache for a special secret, ensuring a ton of lead type – cast into the river in 1916 by Thomas Cobden-Sanderson to prevent his treasured designs being exploited – remains out of reach of the mudlarks, before it crawls onwards to the tidal head. Around four and a half hours from now, the river will have reached the locks and weir at Teddington. And here it will take a deep, earthy, leaf-scented breath, before beginning its journey seawards once more.

## Historical significance

It is the tides that make mudlarking in London so unique. For just a few hours each day, the river gives us access to its contents, which shift and change as the water ebbs and flows, to reveal the story of a city, its people and their relationship with a natural force. If the Seine in Paris were tidal it would no doubt satisfy an army of Parisian mudlarks. When the non-tidal Amstel River in Amsterdam was recently drained to make way for a new train line, archaeologists recorded almost 700,000 objects, of just the sort we find in the Thames: buttons burst off waistcoats, rings slipped from fingers and buckles from shoes – the possessions of ordinary people, direct



**Above: The author mudlarking on the Thames foreshore**

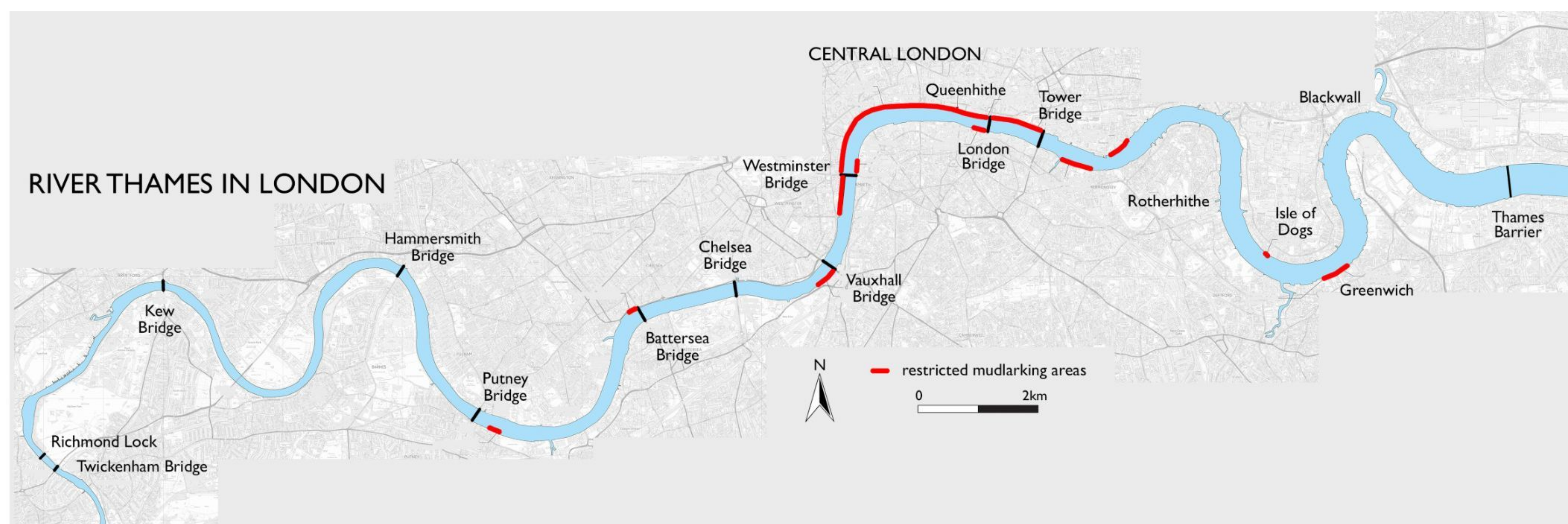
**Below: The Thames in London; various degrees of restrictions for mudlarking apply in marked areas**

links to long-forgotten lives.

Two thousand years ago, the Thames was twice as wide as it is now. The Romans took its Celtic name, recording it as Tamesis. Its deep tidal waters allowed their large seagoing boats to come far inland, bringing troops and imported goods and taking away local produce and slaves. They built jetties, quays and wharves, and eventually a river wall was constructed to contain the tide. As the city grew, the spaces between the shore and natural river islands were filled in, tributaries were covered over and

more land was reclaimed behind a series of wooden and stone river walls. Over the centuries, the channel narrowed to become the familiar thin brown ribbon that loops its way through the city today.

In its natural state the riverbed has a gentle incline towards the centre, but to facilitate the loading and unloading of increasing numbers of ships that by the start of the 18th century were coming to London from around the globe, it needed to be flat. Platforms known as “barge beds” or “hards” were constructed next to wharves and jetties.





The hards left on the foreshore today are contained within strong wooden revetments built several yards from the river wall, filled with the city's rubbish – soil, rubble and general waste – and capped with a hard surface, often rammed chalk.

The river was transformed during the 19th century, with new embankments on both sides and new bridges and docks, and the channel was dredged to enable large ships to travel further upstream. London's longest archaeological site began to relinquish its treasures. Mixing with thieves, beggars and mudlarks – the latter mostly children and old women – rich collectors and antiquaries pounced on the objects that appeared in dredgermen's buckets and labourers' spades. Thousands of objects now in our museums have come from the foreshore, among them Bronze and Iron Age swords, spears and shields, including the famous Battersea Shield, dredged from the riverbed in 1857 during excavations for the old Chelsea Bridge.

Thomas Layton and Charles Roach Smith built up enviable collections of objects which they bought from mudlarks, fishermen, watermen, dredgermen and workmen, often for little more than a bottle of beer. Roach Smith was a chemist by trade and focused his attentions on Roman objects from the river at London Bridge. Layton, who lived at Brentford, spread his net wider. He paid



**Above:** Small wooden sculpture of the elephant-headed god Ganesha, shown sitting on a lotus flower, one of many Hindu items thrown into the Thames, which for some has become a sacred river

comparatively well for what he bought, and was well known among the river workers. He became a recluse. When he died in 1911, antiquaries assessed his collection stacked high in his house and 30 garden sheds and found 28 Bronze Age rapiers, 33 Bronze Age swords, 34 spearheads and six bronze sickles, all of which had been found in the Thames.

But not everything was as it seemed. Two enterprising mudlarks called William Smith and Charles Eaton decided that they could make more money by manufacturing “antiquities”, casting a range of faux-medieval objects in hand-cut plaster moulds. They were rumbled in 1861 by a sewer hunter who exposed them to a member of the Society of Antiquaries, but they continued in business until Charley's death from consumption in 1870. Examples of “Billy and Charleys” are

**Above:** *The Thames is tidal throughout London, rising and falling 5m in the city*

**Below:** *A pot washed up on the tide after use in a Hindu ceremony*

now in the British Museum and the Museum of London, displayed next to ancient objects they sought to emulate.

After the Second World War Ivor Noël Hume, the godfather of modern mudlarks, became “a something for nothing collector”, as he put it, and





spent eight years searching the foreshore. He took coins, medieval pilgrim badges, marbles, tobacco pipes and wig curlers to the Guildhall Museum, where he later worked before he left for America in 1957 to become chief archaeologist at Colonial Williamsburg. Hume was the first archaeologist to recognise the historical significance of objects found on the

*Right: A human skull and longbones were found in the tidal zone, so moved further up shore, their location recorded, and reported to the finds liaison officer, the Museum of London and the police*



BRITISH MUSEUM

LARA MAIKLEM (2)



*Left: The style of the Battersea Shield, a bronze facing from a wooden shield, suggests it was made between 350 and 50BC; it was found in the Thames in 1857, perhaps near the Chelsea Suspension Bridge, and can now be seen in the British Museum*

*Right: A Roman bone scabbard chape found by the author near London Bridge; one of only two known from Britain, it is of a type made in the late second or third century AD for auxiliary regiments*



3cm



*Below: Roman pots*



PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME



Thames foreshore, dismissing his colleagues' objections that the lack of context rendered them of little interest: as he wrote in *Treasure in the Thames* (1955), he considered it his duty to rescue and appreciate objects for what they were in themselves. "Artefacts have to be seen first as fragments of life", he wrote in his autobiography, "and only afterward as potsherds to be scientifically studied." His ethos made him perfectly suited to the foreshore, because almost everything here is out of context.

The old barge beds had to be regularly maintained, but by the 1970s the wharves and warehouses had closed. The river has been slowly breaking through the revetments and scooping out the contents, but the beds' demise is my gain. Within the revetments are demolished houses, road sweepings, domestic refuse, kiln waste and spoil from foundations and cellars dug deep into the medieval and Roman layers of the city. It is one of the reasons the foreshore's bounty is so random, why I have eased an 18th-century clay pipe bowl out of the mud only to find a medieval coin beneath it, why Roman roof tiles lie next to Tudor bricks, and Victorian bottles rub shoulders with shards of 16th-century stoneware jugs.

## For the future

For most of the people I know, mudlarking is a peaceful pastime. But for some the foreshore is a quiet battlefield, the site of petty feuding, territorial disputes, jealousies, fierce competition and paranoia. Eyes-only foragers like me enjoy the searching as much as the finding, and derive pleasure from the simplest of objects: an unusually shaped stone, a colourful shard of pottery or a random blob of lead. The time I spend looking is as important, if not more so, than the objects I take home. Hunters, by contrast, are more demanding of the river, driven by the find, its monetary value or its rarity. They use detectors, sieves and trowels to cut into the mud, too impatient to let time and nature take its course. The hunters are often men, while gatherers tend to be women. It is rare to see a woman on the foreshore with a metal detector.

There had long been a permit system for those who wish to metal-detect, scrape and dig, but there was some confusion over whether a permit was



**Left: Top of a rare type of late medieval Mediterranean glass bottle**

London, and all permit holders agree to abide by a code of practice.

To obtain a Mudlark permit you have to be a member of the Society of Mudlarks, which dates back to the 1970s when hobbyist metal-detecting was in its infancy. In an attempt to control and monitor what was being taken and to discourage illegal digging, permits were issued that allowed people to dig the foreshore in return for recording their finds with the Museum of London. Over time, the society developed into a select group of 50 members, predominantly men and mostly detectorists, who meet regularly at a "secret" pub. To join the society you need to have held a Standard permit and been reporting your finds to the

necessary for eyes-only searching. Concerns had grown about safety, mudlarking in restricted areas and the unreported removal of historic artefacts. So in 2016, the Port of London Authority, the principal foreshore owner with the Crown Estate, decided to clarify the situation. Anyone searching the foreshore in any way now needs a permit. There are two kinds: a Standard permit for detecting and digging down to 7.5cm in permitted areas; and a Mudlark permit for digging to a depth of 1.2m and using detectors on a wider area of foreshore. All removed finds must be reported to a Portable Antiquities Scheme's finds liaison officer or the Museum of



**Above: A money box, box knobs and Elizabethan coins from various parts of the foreshore; such pots were used to collect entry payments at Shakespearean theatres, and smashed in the "box office" to extract the coins (see feature Nov/Dec 2012/127)**



**Left: An 18th-century mustard pot**

museum for two years. Membership is at the discretion of the society, which maintains a deliberate air of mystery and exclusivity; it can take years to receive an invitation, if at all.

Our knowledge of the city and the lives of its inhabitants over millennia has undoubtedly been increased by the objects society members have dug up, but I think the time has come to ban digging completely. There is no need to keep disturbing an already fragile and fast-eroding foreshore for more and better objects. They are better left where they are for the future, rather than putting them to the mercy of an





**Left:** Shaped fragment of whale bone found close to Greenland Dock, Rotherhithe, the main port for London's Atlantic whaling industry in the 18th century

register on the sweep of their detectors. They leave poorly filled-in holes that are lethal to the unwary.

## Personal relationship

Once I had discovered the foreshore, the river became my escape, from people, work, awkward situations, even sometimes from myself. In the middle of my dirty, noisy, thrilling city I had found something familiar from my childhood days on a farm – a wild brooding place with a wide-open sky. It was where I went to forget about my failing relationship and my unfulfilling jobs; it healed my broken heart, helped me to make sense of the senseless and

threw a watery arm around my shoulders when life became too much. Sometimes, just a stolen half hour was enough. Other times I walked beside it for miles.

Then one day I read a newspaper article that described what I was doing as “mudlarking”. By then I’d ditched the Tupperware container in favour of a bum bag that left my hands free. My favourite wellingtons were kept stationed by the door. I had watched my small stretch of the river shift and change over several years, and learned how the currents and tides scoured its banks and deposited its treasures. I was a fully-fledged mudlark.



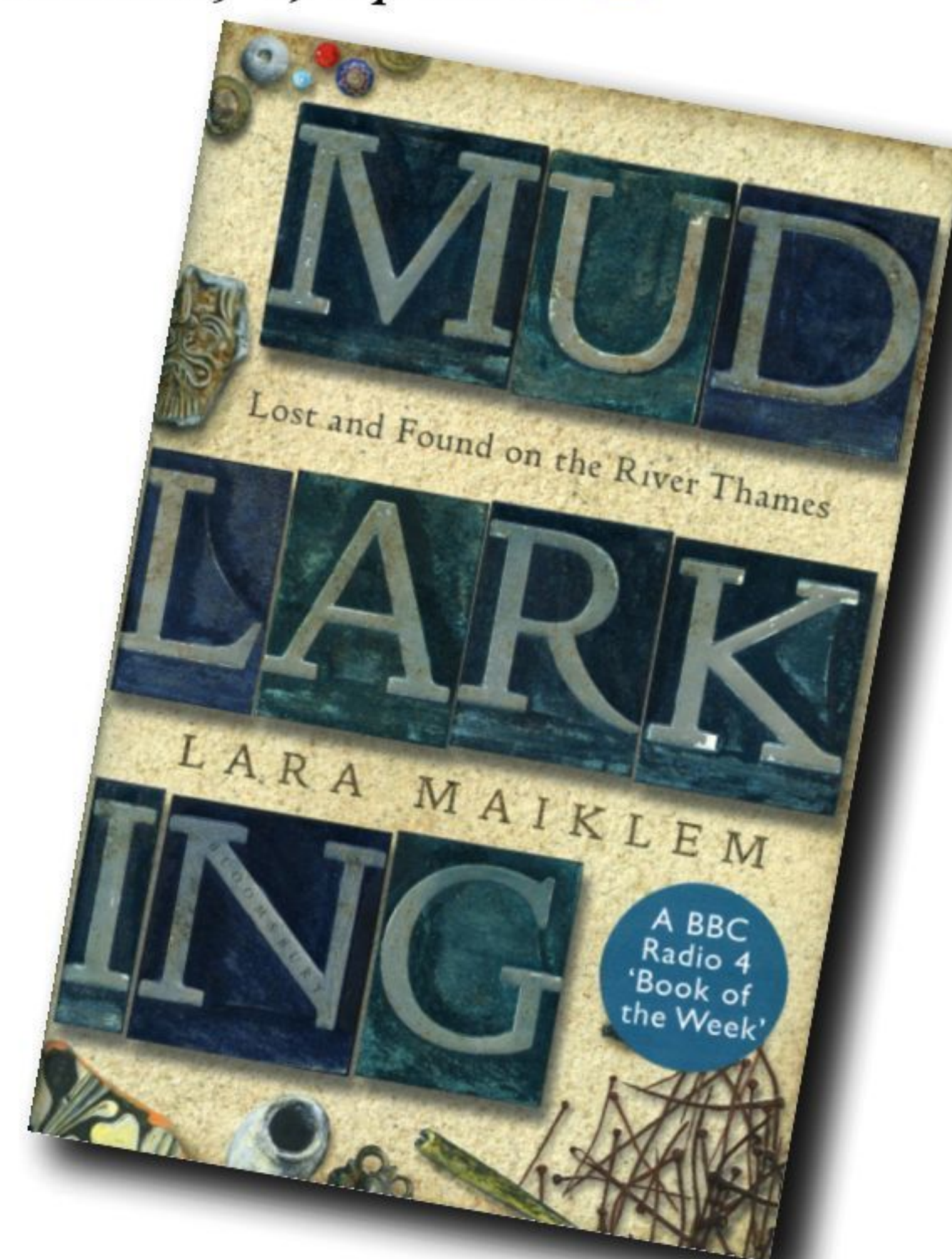
**Right:** Gun flint, probably from Brandon, Suffolk and 18th or 19th century

indiscriminate spade or fork. While only a handful of people still legally dig, the damage they do can be considerable. They hack through centuries in an afternoon, and in their rush to beat the incoming tide, they smash delicate objects and miss the small and non-metallic pieces that don't

**Below:** Remains of a fish trap at Rotherhithe, possibly 19th century



This article is edited from extracts from *Mudlarking: Lost & Found on the River Thames* (2019). Lara Maiklem is a freelance publishing consultant and author who can be found on Twitter and Facebook at @LondonMudlark and Instagram at @london.mudlark. “Foragers of the Foreshore”, part of the Totally Thames Festival, features mudlarking in an exhibition at the Bargehouse on Bankside, London (25–29 September) ■





# THE TIDAL TH

## The UK's greatest public archaeological site



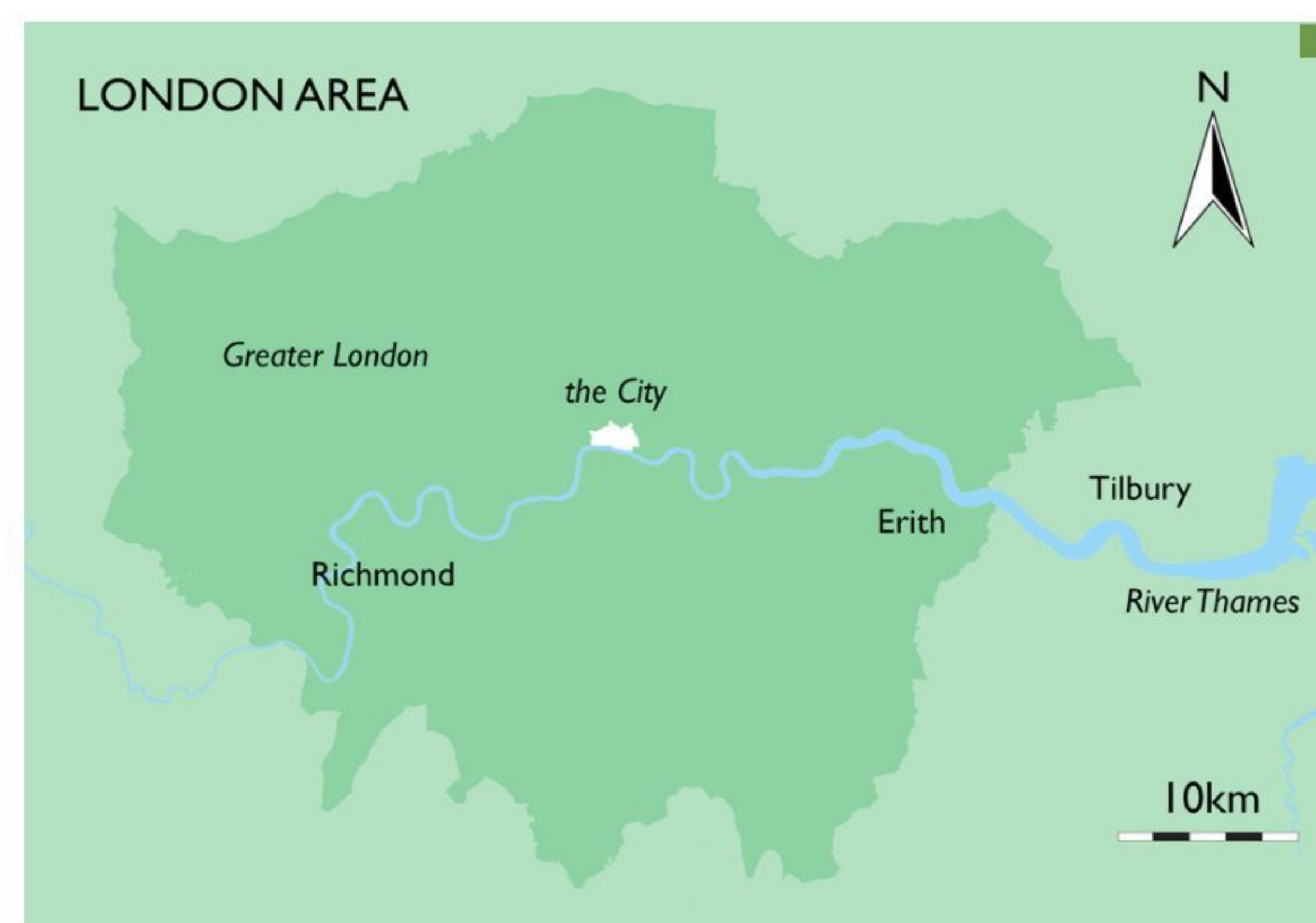
The Thames Discovery Programme, founded to bring understanding and enjoyment of the historic river to the widest possible audience, recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. Josh Frost and Elliott Wragg review some key remains

Twice a day the falling tide of the River Thames reveals what is London's longest archaeological site, two parallel stretches of foreshore with an abundance of well-preserved archaeology. Since late 2008, the staff and dedicated volunteers of the Thames Discovery Programme (TDP), hosted by MOLA, have worked to record and monitor this archaeology against creeping erosion, with the river effectively excavating the foreshore for us. Whilst this creates a battle of time, it also presents us with a unique opportunity to record a wide range of archaeological features which tell the

full breadth of London's story.

We are lucky on the Thames to have a strong legacy of intertidal archaeologists, pioneered through the work of Ivor Noël Hume, Geoff Egan, Gustav Milne and Tony Pilson. Our predecessor organisation the Thames Archaeological Survey laid the groundwork for many of the sites we still regularly work on today, through their survey of the foreshore in the 1990s.

At the heart of the TDP and its work are our volunteers. With a "patch" stretching from Erith in the shadow of the Dartford Crossing to Richmond in



*Below: Gustav Milne and Jane Sidell wade out to find more of a Bronze Age structure at Vauxhall (2009)*

the leafy west, there is a lot of ground to cover, too much for the small core staff. Since the outset of the project we have trained volunteers to join in the task of preserving and recording the archaeology (see feature Sep/Oct 2009/108). The Foreshore Recording & Observation Group, the FROG for short, can be found on the foreshore during our fieldwork season (March to August) and beyond, as part of a local monitoring group focused on a particular stretch of foreshore. It is a combination of this fieldwork and more localised monitoring of features that helps build an overall view of the state of the archaeology. All volunteers undergo two days of training with the team before they begin working on sites across London.

### Traps, slipways & jetties

The earliest traces on the Thames foreshore are from the prehistoric. During this period the river followed a different course to the north, but slowly moved southwards where it became the focal point of a wide range of activities. The foreshore at Vauxhall is of particular importance for prehistoric remains. Two structures



NATHALIE COHEN, CBA



# AMES

either side of Vauxhall Bridge have been identified. One, downstream of the bridge, consists of some six timbers that have been dated to the late Mesolithic period (8000–4000BC), making them London's oldest known structure. The second, upstream of the bridge, consists of 22 timbers dating to the Middle Bronze Age (1500–1150BC)

**Right: Remains of an Anglo-Saxon fishtrap at Chelsea at lowest tide (2016)**



NATHALIE COHEN (2)



and featured on *Time Team* in 2000. It is speculated that these timbers could have been a jetty or bridge to a lost island or some kind of ritual platform, due to the location near the confluence of several Thames tributaries.

Exploitation of the river and its resources has long been part of the Thames' story. Dotted along the river are a number of fishtraps, now reduced to stumps in the foreshore mud. Examples have been found at Greenwich, the Tower, Chelsea, Barn

**Above: ss Great Eastern launch slipway, downstream of Masthouse Pier on the Isle of Dogs (2015)**

**Below: FROG volunteers cleaning timbers at Rotherhithe (2018)**

Elms, Putney, Nine Elms and Isleworth, and all date from the late Roman to the end of the Saxon period. One of the best preserved is at Chelsea (dated to 790–900AD) with a long neck for trapping the fish and a funnel to force the fish into the trap. It was first recorded in the 1990s, and recent site visits have shown new timbers are still being uncovered, emphasising the need for regular monitoring of the river.

Another key industry associated with the river is shipping, and both the building and breaking up of ships. London thrived as a centre of civilian and naval shipbuilding until the later 19th century when the congestion of the Thames and the needs of iron shipbuilding led to yards closing or relocating. However, remains of the industry can still be seen on the foreshore, where much of the activity took place. Of particular note is the slipway for the launch of Brunel's ss *Great Eastern* at Burrell's Wharf on the Isle of Dogs, now a scheduled ancient monument. Just across the river, FROG volunteers have worked to record a

series of slipways made of reused ship's timbers that served the Deptford Royal Dockyard. This reuse of timbers can be seen at sites at Charlton and Rotherhithe, where 18th- and 19th-century warships' timbers have been used to create new foreshore structures.

The river was also the main thoroughfare for goods in and out of London, and for east-west travel. Numerous wharves, river stairs, causeways and jetties, in particular a 17th-century jetty at Greenwich and a possible 13th-century example at the Tower, have been recorded.

While the general public has access to much of the foreshore in Greater London, in order to search for artefacts you need a permit from the Port of London Authority. The Thames Discovery Programme runs outreach events throughout the year in the form of organised guided walks, lectures and workshops, allowing everyone to engage with the foreshore archaeology. In the last three years we have been able to expand our work as a result of funding from the City Bridge Trust and Tideway. This has allowed us to involve both older and younger Londoners, including a young volunteers group called the Tadpoles. If you are interested in seeing the foreshore for yourself or getting involved in the work we do, visit our website at [thamesdiscovery.org](http://thamesdiscovery.org) or email us at [thamesdiscovery@mola.org.uk](mailto:thamesdiscovery@mola.org.uk).

*Elliott Wragg is project officer and Joshua Frost is senior community archaeologist, at the Thames Discovery Programme. See 'The River's Tale': Archaeology on the Thames Foreshore in Greater London (2017), by Nathalie Cohen & Elliott Wragg with Jon Cotton & Gustav Milne* ■

HELEN JOHNSTON





# Rediscovering the Poole Logboat



Found on the Dorset coast half a century ago, an Iron Age logboat survived thanks to local initiatives. It was re-displayed in 2007 and has been newly analysed. Jessica Berry and Dave Parham tell the story of one of Britain's largest known prehistoric watercraft

A large fragment of wood was dredged out of Poole Harbour in August 1964. It lay in 6–7m of water on the edge of the main shipping channel, 75m off the current eastern shore of Brownsea Island. Two weeks later Bournemouth British Sub Aqua Club divers found another great timber. Laid side by side the two pieces formed the near-complete bottom of a 10m-long boat hewn from a single oak log.

At the time logboats inspired little interest, and methods of preserving ancient waterlogged wood were little developed. Many maritime finds and structures were discovered, but

they often went unrecorded and remains were rarely kept. Remarkably, however, Poole Museum and a succession of volunteers and staff kept the logboat in wet storage for so long that conservation and display were achieved almost four decades after its discovery. A recent project has for the first time documented the boat's archaeological journey, and examined the remains in detail. How was it built? Did it ever float? Weighing about 1.5 tonnes, it had lain imposingly in the entrance to Poole Museum for many years, with so many key questions unanswered – until now.

*Below: The Poole logboat soon after its recovery in 1964, in two pieces*

## Conservation

After discovery the logboat survived a few years in quayside yards, and by the early 1970s it was stored in a concrete water tank at Scaplen's Court, one of the museum buildings. Conservation with PEG (polyethylene glycol) was never completed. In 1995 the Poole Museums Archaeological Unit took on responsibility for the boat, and Jeremy Hutchings, advised by Jim Spriggs of York Archaeological Trust, adopted a new, pioneering option of replacing water with sucrose before slow drying. The wood was immersed in a solution donated by British Sugar, inside an old sugar road-tanker with its top removed and parked in a council depot – where on occasion it attracted the particular interest of swarms of wasps.

In 2004 the then Poole Waterfront Museum won a £750,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant towards a £1.3m modernisation programme; as part of the project, the logboat would be displayed for the first time. One condition of the HLF funding was that treatment had to be finished in the spirit of the original conservation strategy – simple, low-cost and ostensibly carried out by museum staff, with only periodic supervision of







specialist conservators. To this end, Spriggs designed and built a humidity-controlled chamber to accelerate the drying process under tightly controlled conditions. This was achieved with essential support from Hutchings and museum staff. Drying followed the

*Above: The logboat on display in Poole Museum today*

designed course with minimal shrinkage and movement of the wood, and was quicker than estimated due to the equipment's efficiency. Volunteers and museum staff were again involved, helping with the final task of surface cleaning and preparing the logboat for

display. It was ready in time for the opening of Poole Museum in 2007.

In the meantime unidentified caulking material around the transom slot (for taking a flat stern board, which has not survived) had been radiocarbon dated to the Middle Iron





**Left: The boat in 1995 being lifted into its treatment tank, an adapted sugar tanker**



**Left: Conservation sucrose crystals around the transom slot in 2005**

Age, at sometime between 400 and 200BC (calibrated on the most recent curve). Archaeological investigations around Poole Harbour have revealed extensive Iron Age evidence from excavations at Wytch Farm and Bestwall Quarry (feature Nov/Dec 2010/115), and smaller-scale investigations on Green Island. These have shown that Poole Harbour was a key element of the along- and cross-Channel exchange network of later

prehistory. Iron Age Poole Harbour had extensive opportunities for manufacture and trade including salt, clay, shale and (Purbeck) stone and was well known for its pottery, distributed along the coast and river networks.

## Recording

The boat was well photographed soon after its discovery, and Sean McGrail did the first recording and analysis – when it was in a tank of water – for his

larger survey of logboats in England and Wales, published in 1978. Even then, however, abrasion, decay, distortion and shrinkage of the timbers had occurred. The new study has been conducted by Damian Goodburn, an archaeological woodwork specialist at MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), and Pat Tanner, a boatbuilder, sailor and maritime archaeologist, and specialist in 3D scanning. Unfortunately, says Goodburn, the surface zones of ancient waterlogged timber, where most features such as toolmarks and wear are to be found, are most prone to loss in handling and storage. A forensic approach extracted as much information as possible from the limited surviving evidence.

A 3D laser scan carried out by 1st Horizon Surveying & Engineering Ltd allowed Tanner to play with varying hypothetical digital reconstructions to more accurately study the boat's seaworthiness. The remains could not be moved, so the 29 individual scans were done inside the display cabinet. The resulting polygon mesh model was exported to Rhinoceros 3D, a CAD modelling software, and the original 1974 survey drawings were imported and aligned.

Despite the challenging mathematical equations Tanner brought the logboat to life using different hypothetical calculations to create snapshots of the vessel in particular flotation conditions, altered and repeated each time for the addition or repositioning of crew, cargo or ballast. McGrail had proposed a semi-circular profile, and a boat capable of carrying 18 people, or four men with a cargo of around 1700kg. The new analysis shows a logboat with a flatter D-shaped cross-section and a smaller load-carrying capacity (around 1300kg), and a substantially less stable craft. However a hypothetical reconstruction resulted in a vessel with a capacity of 1900kg which could easily be propelled by two crew at 4 or 5 knots. This calculation assumes the boat was made with freshly cut or green oak; if the timber had been dried, its capacity could have been increased by 400kg.

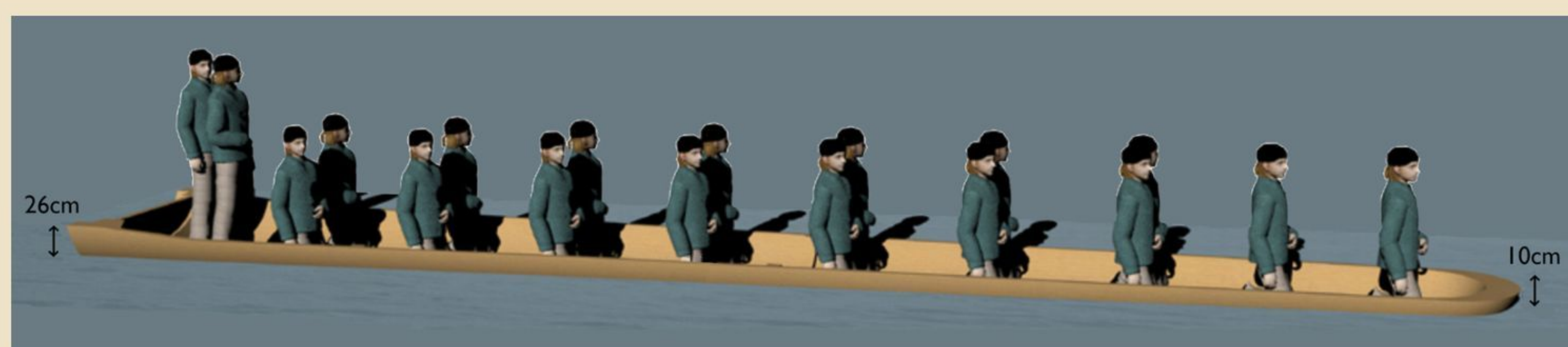
Nonetheless, as Goodburn states, while the scans of the surviving remains have produced an accurate 3D digital image and a new set of plans,



**Left: The boat being 3D scanned in 2013, with Tom Cousins from Bournemouth University**



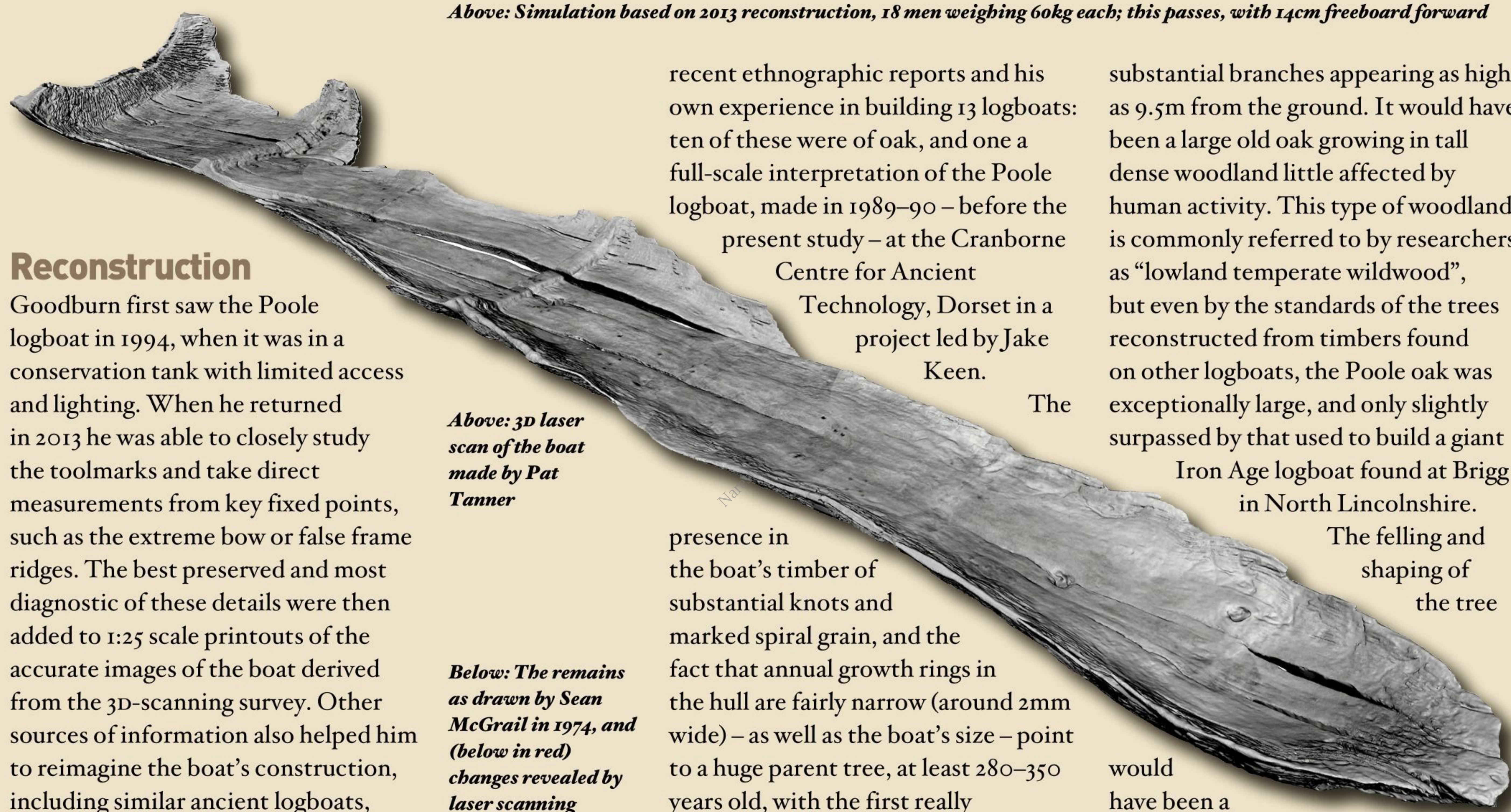
elevations and sections of the boat as it is now, the dimensions and form of the original vessel would probably have differed markedly. Ancient waterlogged oak timber is well understood to shrink and distort to varying degrees, depending on the section of log used, amount of decay and speed of drying. Green oak will also shrink and distort as it dries out, or seasons, common with large sections. In addition the degree of distortion, shrinkage and erosion which the hull of the logboat underwent after abandonment is very difficult to assess now, over 50 years after its exposure.



*Above: One of many simulations by Pat Tanner; based on the 1974 records with 2 men standing and 16 kneeling, this fails, with less than 13cm freeboard forward*



*Above: Simulation based on 2013 reconstruction, 18 men weighing 60kg each; this passes, with 14cm freeboard forward*



*Above: 3D laser scan of the boat made by Pat Tanner*

*Below: The remains as drawn by Sean McGrail in 1974, and (below in red) changes revealed by laser scanning*

recent ethnographic reports and his own experience in building 13 logboats: ten of these were of oak, and one a full-scale interpretation of the Poole logboat, made in 1989–90 – before the present study – at the Cranborne Centre for Ancient Technology, Dorset in a project led by Jake Keen.

The

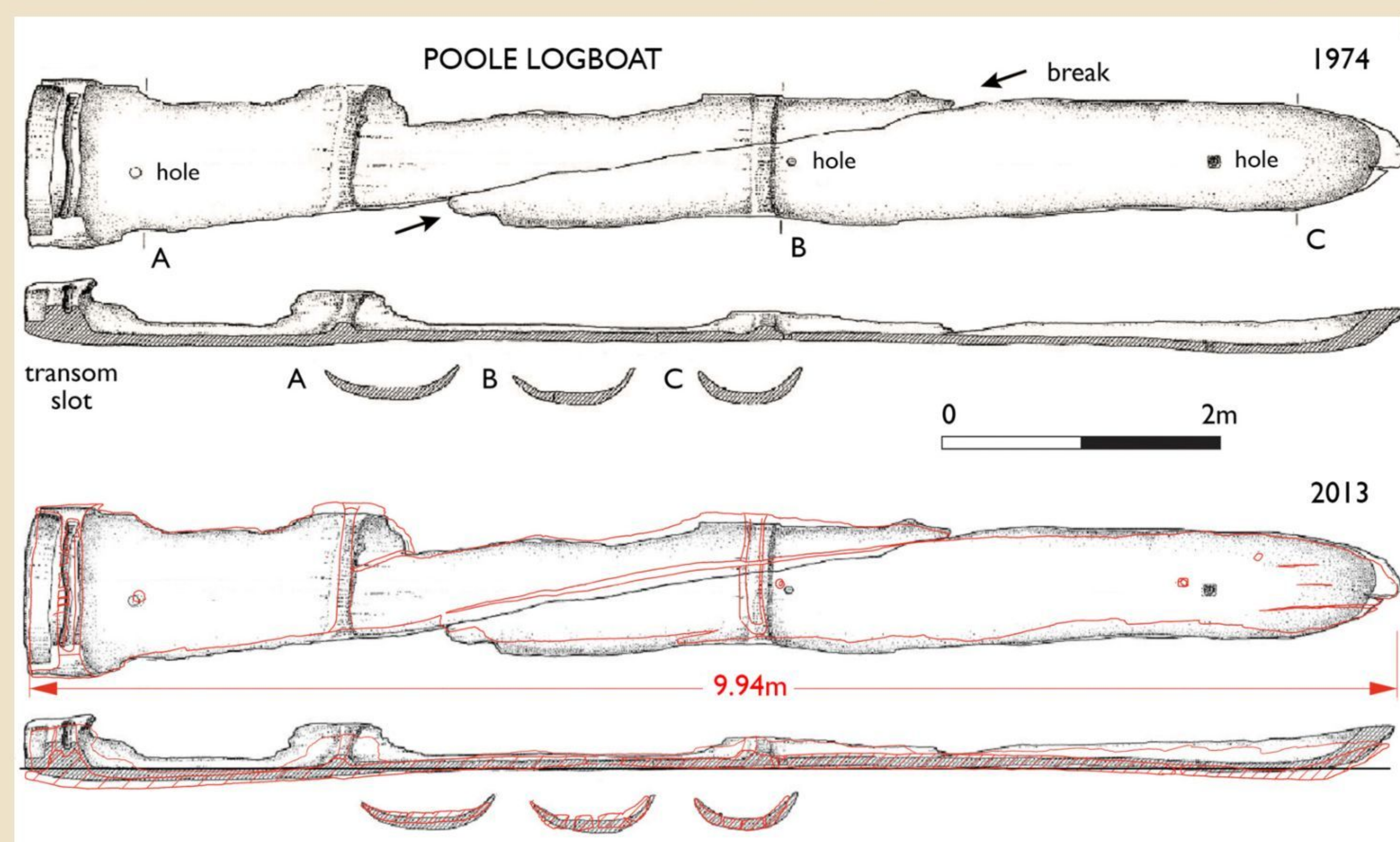
substantial branches appearing as high as 9.5m from the ground. It would have been a large old oak growing in tall dense woodland little affected by human activity. This type of woodland is commonly referred to by researchers as “lowland temperate wildwood”, but even by the standards of the trees reconstructed from timbers found on other logboats, the Poole oak was exceptionally large, and only slightly surpassed by that used to build a giant Iron Age logboat found at Brigg in North Lincolnshire.

The felling and shaping of the tree

presence in the boat’s timber of substantial knots and marked spiral grain, and the fact that annual growth rings in the hull are fairly narrow (around 2mm wide) – as well as the boat’s size – point to a huge parent tree, at least 280–350 years old, with the first really

would have been a major undertaking, using small iron-bladed axes, wedges, levers and mallets. At least five, or more likely ten, people would have been involved. Including removed branches and chips from felling and carving, around five tonnes of firewood would have been produced. We can picture the boatbuilding site with a stream of men, women and children visiting with food and water and leaving loaded with fuel to stockpile at the settlement; if the tree was far from the settlement, temporary shelter would have been erected at the site. Fats or oils would have been applied to the finished craft, to slow the drying out of the sap and reduce splitting.

At a late stage in construction three small bottom holes were cut out of the





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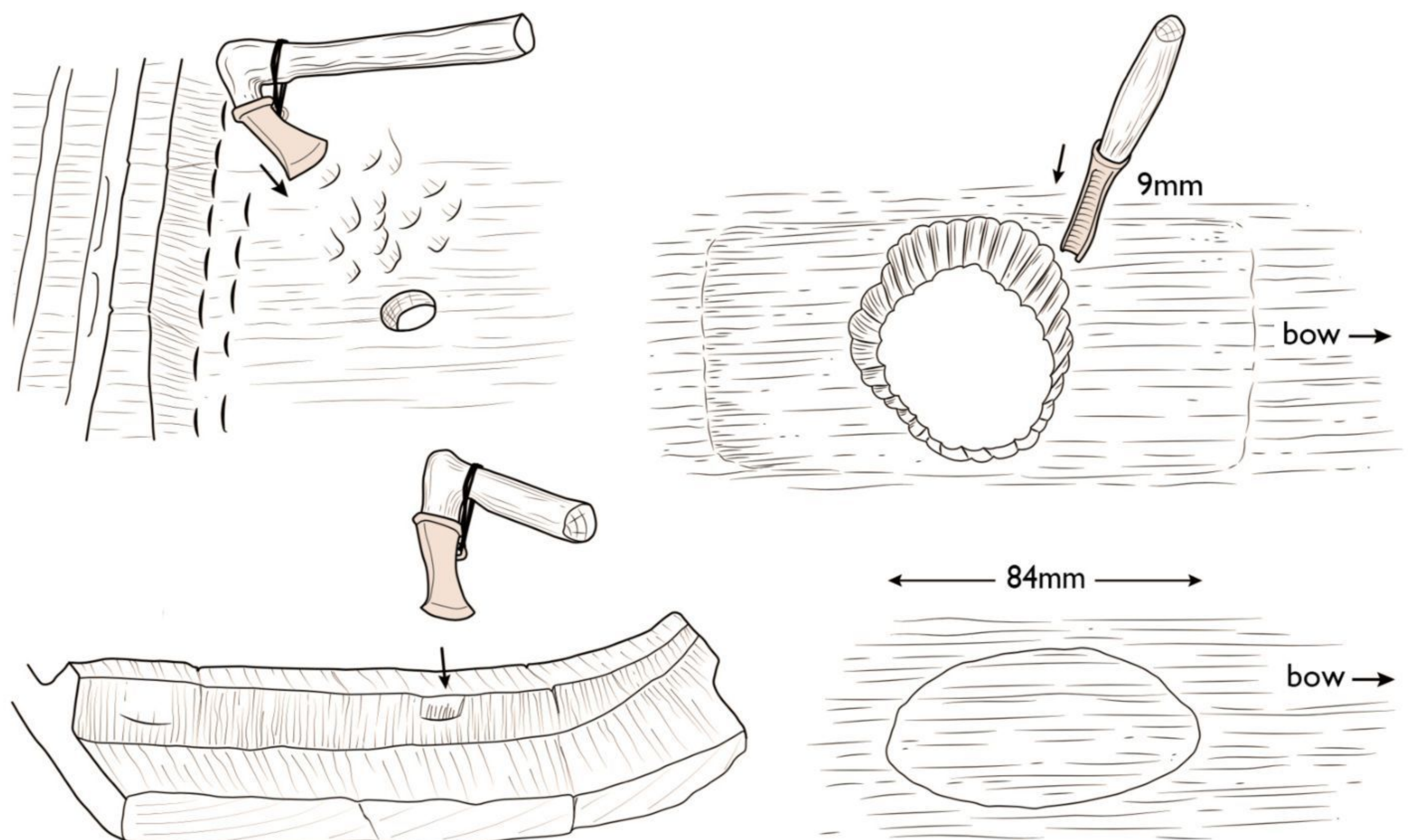


**Above: Replica Bronze Age tools used by English Heritage to build a roundhouse at Beeston Castle, Cheshire; relatively rare Iron Age axe and adze blades resemble scaled-up versions of Late Bronze Age tools**

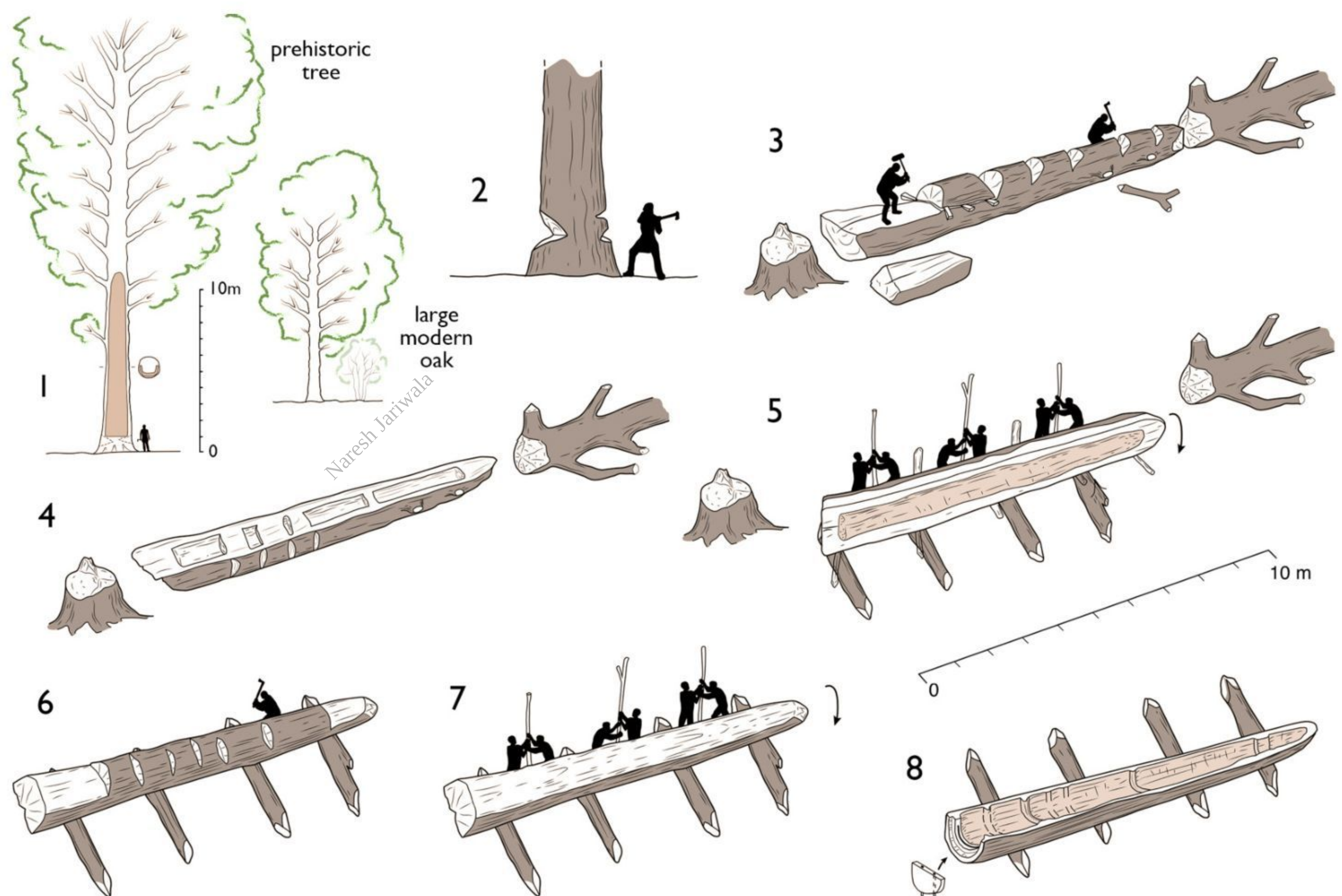
boat's hull, which would have helped the builders gauge the wood's thickness. Two of the holes have a recess around the upper side, which could imply they held a vertical timber rather than just a wooden bung, and all three are larger – two 5cm across, that at the stern 9cm – than is typical for thickness gauging. Sailing craft are known by the end of the Iron Age in the English Channel area, so a mast is possible, perhaps to carry a towing or hauling-out line raised above the reeds, or even fitting for downwind sailing, though this is highly speculative.

A curious feature first seen in 2013 is a finely scribed oval, 8cm long by 5cm wide, 10cm to starboard of the centre line and 1m from the extreme bow. It was probably cut with a fine knife tip or the corner of an axe or adze blade. Had there been two such marks it might tentatively have been suggested that they were symbolic eyes, or *oculi*. These have occasionally been found at the bow ends of other logboats, such as the Brigg craft. Perhaps the Pool boat's faint, singular character implies a secretive magic rather than something to be publicly displayed.

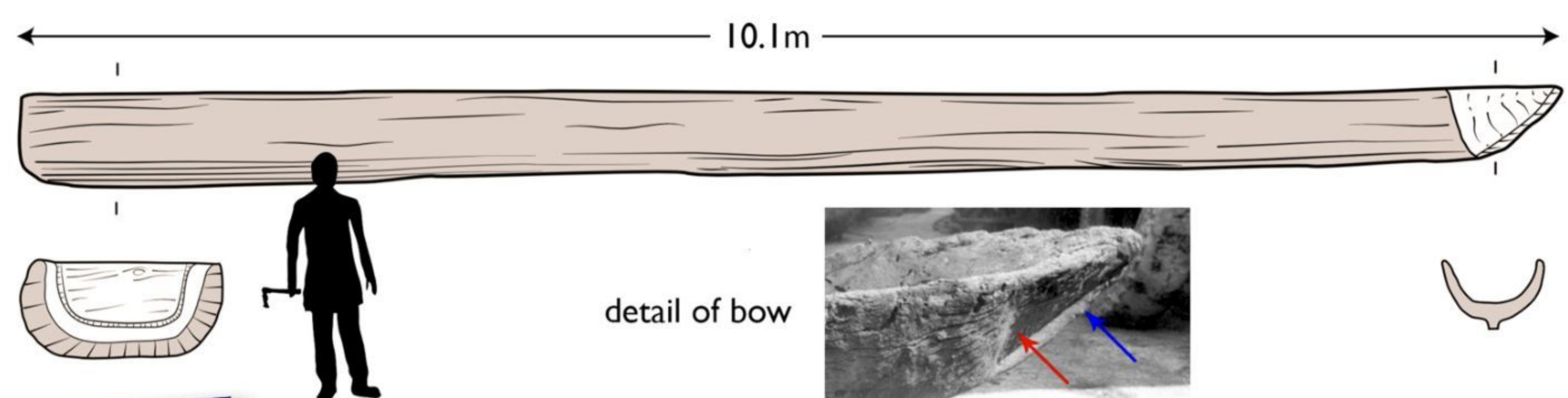
The great size and weight of this logboat, combined with its low sides in relation to its length, make exposed sea voyaging impossible – severe trouble was experienced in gently towing the Cranborne reconstruction to nearby Christchurch Harbour in the early 1990s. Thus the building site must have been somewhere in the hinterland of Poole Harbour, as it was then, implying nearby great patches of lowland deciduous wildwood, now extinct in Europe except in protected



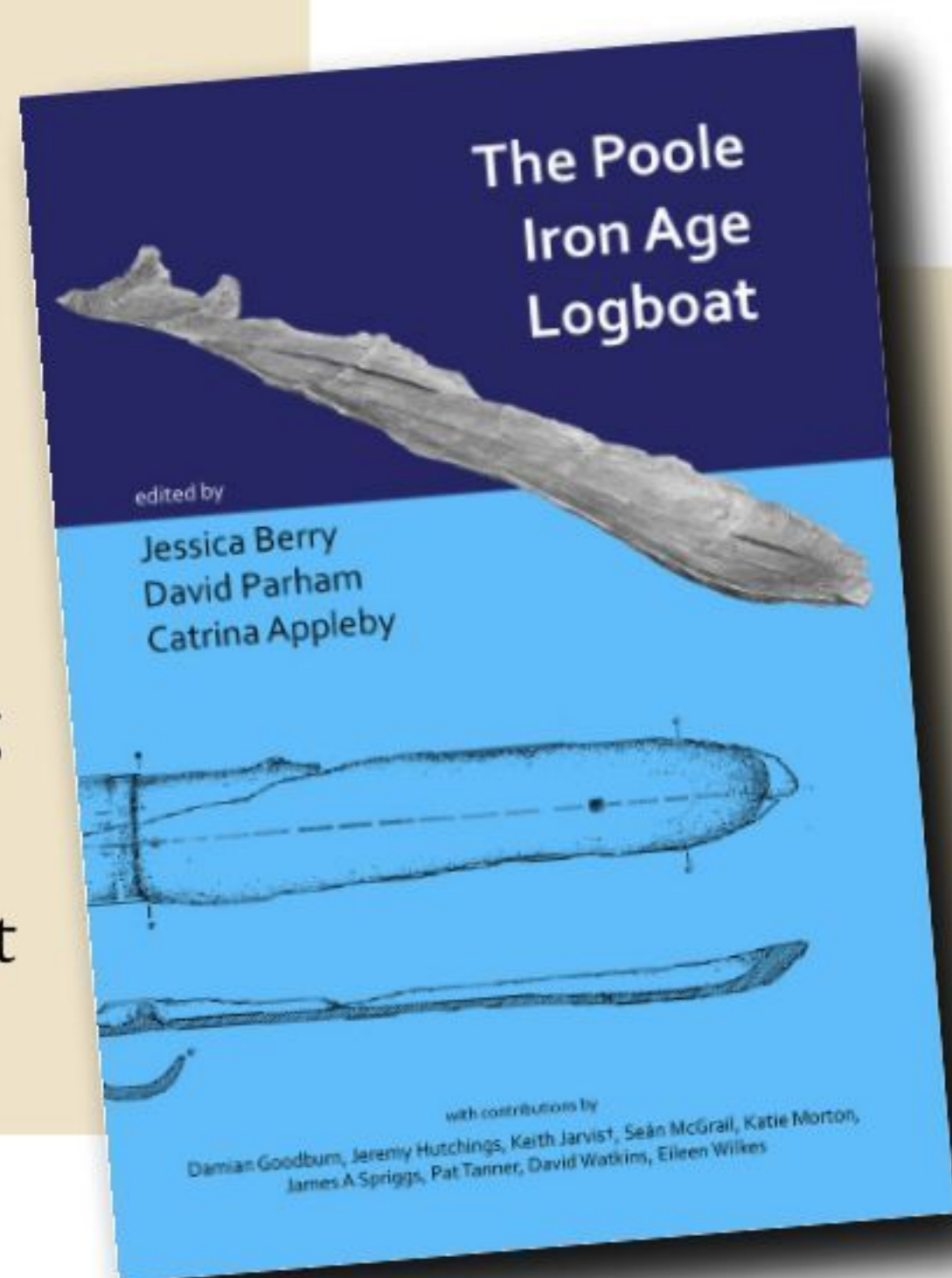
**Toolmarks in the wood, from 1964 photos and records made in 1994 and 2013; bottom right is an oval 1m from the extreme bow, perhaps scratched with a knife tip and a symbolic eye**



**Stages in the construction of the Poole logboat, drawn by Damian Goodburn**



**Goodburn's reconstructed shape and dimensions of the freshly built boat**



forest reserves of eastern Poland. The logboat's design is relatively sophisticated, with a slot-fitted transom and well-shaped bow, and it could have been used for successfully navigating the sheltered waters of the harbour and its adjoining rivers.

Jessica Berry is CEO of the Maritime Archaeology Sea Trust; Dave Parham is professor in archaeology, anthropology & forensic science, Bournemouth University. See *The Poole Iron Age Logboat*, ed J Berry, D Parham & Catrina Appleby (Archaeopress 2019)



# Council for British Archaeology

## Briefing

Additional events and courses online:  
[www.britisharchaeology.org/briefing](http://www.britisharchaeology.org/briefing)

### Fieldwork

The CBA cannot accept responsibility for operating conditions of projects.

#### Archaeology at Cannon Hall

*Cannon Hall Museum, Park and Gardens  
Bark House Lane Cawthorne S75 4AT, 26-27.11.19*

TJC Heritage in collaboration with Barnsley MBC. Join us as we investigate the archaeology of Cannon Hall in a series of community digs. We will be undertaking a series of small test pits across the grounds and local expert archaeologists will be on hand to welcome you, explain everything you need to know and lend a helping hand throughout the day. Booking is essential.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/archaeology-at-cannon-hall-tickets-71627526861>

### Conferences, Meetings & Lectures

#### University Archaeology Day

12.10.19, The British Museum Great Russell Street London WC1B 3DG

This event is designed for prospective students, teachers and parents to learn about the many degree programmes on offer across the UK, to discover the huge range of career opportunities that an archaeology degree can lead to, and to hear about some of the latest archaeological research.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/university-archaeology-day-2019-tickets-64803521076>

#### Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group

12.10.19, The Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge

Day school from 9.15am to 4.45pm, talks include West Yorkshire Registry of Deeds (West Yorkshire Archive Service); Censuses and house history (Anna Mealia); Land valuation survey 1910-1915 (Mary Twentyman and



Archaeologists are celebrating the 80th anniversary of the excavation that discovered an Anglo-Saxon ship burial at **Sutton Hoo, Suffolk**. Edith Pretty, the landowner, gave the finds to the British Museum in 1939, and in 1998 the Annie Tranmer Trust gave the house and estate to the National Trust. The latter soon opened a pioneering visitor centre, which has now been transformed as part of a £4m project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to "release the story". Treasure replicas

Barbara Reardon); Probate records (Hazel Seidel); and case studies on Old Town Hall (David Cant) and Higher Kinders (Mike Buckley). To book, send contact details and cheque for £20 payable to Hebden Bridge Local History Society to Rachel Smith, Bramble Dene, Moss Lane, Hebden Bridge HX7 7DS or email [membership@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk](mailto:membership@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk) for enquiries.

#### Pitt Rivers Lecture 2019

29.10.19, Bournemouth

The Third Annual Pitt Rivers Lecture entitled "Fire: Friend or Fiend in Human History?" will be given by the internationally renowned anthropologist Professor Ruth Tringham (University of California at Berkeley, USA). It is a free public lecture and will be held in the Fusion Building, Talbot Campus, Bournemouth University, BH12 5BB, at 7:00pm (Displays and welcome reception from 6:30pm). The lecture will explore how archaeologists can and do act as arson investigators many

are displayed in a new Exhibition Hall, while film, sound and displays explore Anglo-Saxon culture and economy. Outside is a curious full-size metal sculpture representing the burial ship, and a new walking route encouraging visitors to see the wider landscape, where soon a 17m high observation tower will be opened. The excavations feature inside Tranmer House, with archive material including diaries, letters and colour photos of the original dig and artefacts from later investigations

centuries or millennia after the event. It will focus on the burned houses of Neolithic Southeast Europe, and earlier examples in Neolithic Anatolia (Çatalhöyük, Turkey), in order to consider how fire has been managed and controlled, and why fire is chosen as a means of destroying places, be they urban or rural, public monuments, or intimate domestic places. For further details and booking please visit the Eventbrite page at: <https://pittrivers.eventbrite.co.uk>

#### The Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past, 12th Annual Conference

30.10.19 – 01.11.19, University of Sheffield

This year's conference is entitled 'Rebels Without a Cause? Accessing and Exploring Adolescents/ Adolescence in the Past'. An interdisciplinary and international society, the 2019 SSCIP Conference seeks to explore the many facets of adolescence, and how scholars from diverse fields of research

offer nuanced insight into the lives of those occupying this unique stage in the life course in the past. This conference is supported by the Sheffield Centre for the Archaeology of Childhood. Confirmed keynote speakers: Prof. Jane Eva Baxter (DePaul University, USA) and Dr Mary Lewis (University of Reading, UK). For further information visit: <https://sscip.wordpress.com> and follow us @SscipChildhood

#### Society for Lincolnshire History & Archaeology - Archaeology Live!

2.11.2019, Riverside Church Centre, Sleaford, NG34 7RY

a series of talks exploring the long and illustrious past of Lincolnshire given by leading archaeologists from within the county and beyond. Come and discover how recent discoveries are helping to re-write the past.

#### 40th Association for Environmental Archaeology Conference

29.11–01.12.19, University of Sheffield

This year's theme is "Living through change: the archaeology of human-environment interactions". We welcome papers that explore environmental change from the human perspective through engagement with questions of change, adaptation, sustainability and human impact. Early Bird prices are available until 1st September, last booking date is 1st November.

<https://tinyurl.com/yxct5f2a>

### CBA Network

#### CBA East Midlands

*Ice Age Landscape and Culture: Newark Academy, London Road, Newark, 23.11.19*

This conference will showcase some of the results from an HLF-funded enterprise to link the Ice Age Journeys project at Farndon Fields with the major Ice Age sites at Bradgate Park and Creswell Crags. The project has focused on mapping the Ice Age landscape, and exploring past culture by making replica artefacts for use in resource boxes for primary schools. Further details will be announced in due course





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To include your news here, please write to James Rose at the CBA, at [briefing@archaeologyUK.org](mailto:briefing@archaeologyUK.org)

● Exhibitions by Mike Pitts

### CBA London

<https://archaeologyinlondon.com/>

### CBA North

Our website and emails to members continue with regional news as well as the events and activities of our local group members and others, whilst our own events for the year are being planned - of which details will be announced in due course to members. For further details, news and more please see our website <https://cbanorth.wordpress.com/> If you can't see what you want or wish to contribute please feel free to contact us at [cbanorth@archaeologyuk.org](mailto:cbanorth@archaeologyuk.org) or contact one of the committee.

### CBA North West

[http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbanw/CBANW\\_notices.html](http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbanw/CBANW_notices.html)

### CBA East South East

Full-day tours to current research excavations and historic sites and towns across the south-east, led by local experts. Tours run until October, with sites ranging from Roman villas to Tudor Palaces. Free to all CBA-SE members, or a small cost for non-members. Limited spaces, early booking is recommended. To book or enquire contact Events Officer, Dr Anne Sassini at [events@cbasouth-east.org](mailto:events@cbasouth-east.org) or [www.cbasouth-east.org/events](http://www.cbasouth-east.org/events)

*CBASE 2019 joint annual conference and AGM, University of Kent, Canterbury, 02.11.19*

This year's annual conference "An Archaeological Perspective on links between the South East and the Continent" and AGM will be run jointly with Kent Archaeological Society Fieldwork Committee and set in the cathedral city of Canterbury. For further information contact: [membership@kentarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:membership@kentarchaeology.org.uk).

### CBA South Midlands

*Autumn conference: Winslow Public Hall, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, 20.10.19*

Our Autumn conference on the theme of Roman villas will explore their place in the landscape, with reference to recent studies of Roman settlement patterns. For the full programme and booking details visit: <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbasml/cba-sm%20events.htm>

### CBA Wales/Cymru

*WOOLOLOGY!?, Royal Welsh Winter Fair, Builth Wells, Powys, 25-26.11.19*

CBA Wales in conjunction with the Clywd Powys Archaeological Trust will be exploring all sorts of fascinating connections between wool use / sheep rearing and archaeology at the the Royal Welsh Winter Fair. As part of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales's sponsorship stand for the Woolpacking and Handling competition, the archaeologists will be showcasing the impact of sheep rearing on our landscape and exploring the ways in which humans have used wool for their own ends. This will include looking at archaeological finds, displays of traditional crafts and opportunities to get interactive with fleece! Find us near the Woolpacking competition areas. <http://www.rwas.wales/>

### CBA Wessex

*2019 Conference 'Sunrise over the Stones: Recent Research into Neolithic and Chalcolithic Wessex', Kimmeridge House,*

*Talbot Campus, Bournemouth University, 09.11.19*

Booking is now open for our 2019 Annual Conference. The conference commences with the lecture, 'Stonehenge Rocks', by Professor Tim Darvill, followed by further distinguished and pre-eminent speakers on the British Neolithic/Chalcolithic. There will be relevant exhibitions, displays and book-sales to browse during refreshment breaks and the CBA Wessex AGM will take place during the lunch break. Tickets £35 for CBAW members, £45 non-members, £20 students, includes lunch and refreshments. Book online: <https://tinyurl.com/yyodh8rv> For queries contact Andy Manning [events@cba-wessex.org.uk](mailto:events@cba-wessex.org.uk) <https://www.cba-wessex.org.uk/events/>

### CBA West Midlands

<http://cbawm.archaeologyuk.org/index.php>



"That's not even from Pompeii", I heard one disgruntled visitor say at the 2019 summer exhibition at the **Ashmolean Museum, Oxford**, called "Last Supper In Pompeii" (until January 12 2020). That not everything is from the doomed city is in fact one of the hidden strengths of this beguiling, beautiful show. Pompeian artefacts that impress with their quality and often size range from statues and great frescoes and mosaics to eating utensils and

carbonised foods, and many are gathered in walk-through tableaux evoking streets, dining rooms and gardens (curator Paul Roberts also led the British Museum's Pompeii and Herculaneum exhibition in 2013). The greater vision, however is about the culture of Roman food, and one's imagination is lifted by the sight of weathered British artefacts (among them a Bloomberg writing tablet) amid the better preserved splendour from the south of the empire

### CBA Yorkshire

CBA Yorkshire Autumn Showcase, Work Station, Sheffield, 23 November <https://www.cba-yorkshire.org.uk/category/events/>

## Courses

### University of Oxford Courses and Workshops in the Historic Environment

Various dates, Oxford

A range of short practical courses to provide training in key skills for archaeologists and specialists in historic buildings and the built environment. Taught at Rewley House with full residential and catering facilities. <https://tinyurl.com/y8pnl3le>, or call 01865 270 380.

### Archaeology: From Dig to Lab & Beyond

Future Learn: Online (University of Reading)

Get an introduction to studying archaeology, exploring exciting discoveries in the Vale of Pewsey, near to Stonehenge and Avebury. We'll show you around our field school at the Vale of Pewsey, a relatively untouched site compared to its famous neighbour, Stonehenge. An excavation is more than just digging with a trowel. You'll investigate how and where to dig, collect, record and store precious finds and take a closer look at what you can learn from a discovery once you've found it. <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/archaeology>

### Recovering Human Remains: Weekend Workshops

19-20.10.19, Winchester

Breaking Ground Heritage is offering a weekend workshop to provide an opportunity for participants to practice the recovery of human remains to professional archaeological standards using staged graves in a WWI scenario. A working knowledge of the processes and the ethical considerations will be covered. This will be of value to those with an interest in British or battlefield archaeology and little or no experience in excavation techniques. Proceeds to support BGH and assist service veterans. <https://tinyurl.com/kxav9xp>





In Paris it sold out to what was said to be the largest exhibition crowd in French history. With a selection of artefacts from Tutankhamun's tomb coming soon to **London**, and tickets selling fast, it seems worth flagging up a show that many readers may be thinking of seeing. "Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh" will be at the **Saatchi Gallery** on (appropriately enough) King's Road from November 2 (closing May 3 2020). I asked Chris Naunton, a freelance Egyptologist who saw the exhibition in Paris, what he made of it – over-hyped baubles or educational? Naunton (who I found had been engaged by a PR company to promote the London outing) seems genuinely impressed. Noting that around 150

objects might seem a small sample of the 5,000 from the tomb, he says this is more than most previous travelling exhibitions have mustered, and the well-lit selection "brought home to me the extent to which the displays in Cairo are overwhelming". "What a joy", he continues, "to be able to see everything clearly and to walk right around most of them, every surface revealing superb details. I saw many things that were new to me, such as the inscriptions on the back of a quartzite statue that have been invisible for decades, with it standing against a wall" (right). The gold death mask will not be there (the gorgeous little coffin, left, was for the king's liver). But, says Naunton, "I would encourage my colleagues to go." ■



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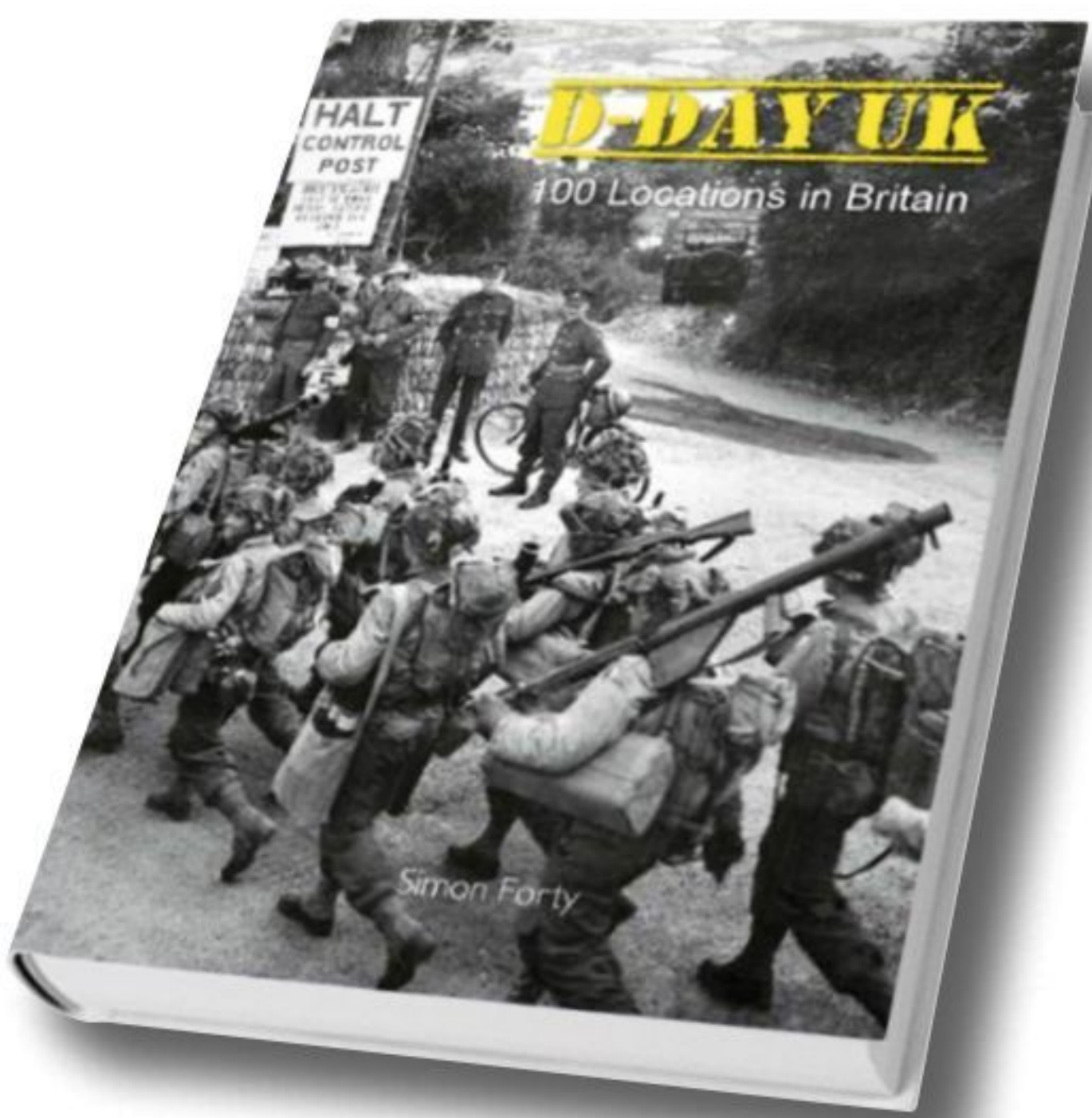


**D-Day UK: 100 Locations in Britain**

by Simon Forty

English Heritage May 2019

£30 pp228 hb ISBN 9781848025400

*Reviewed by Paul Stamper*

Now 75 years on from D-Day, June 6 1944, the locations in Normandy where the 150,000-strong allied invasion force gained initial footholds, such as Omaha, Juno and Sword beaches, Arromanches and Pegasus Bridge, remain deeply venerated. Conversely, the role of places in Britain where the army was gathered, trained and equipped, and from where naval, air and logistic support was provided, is

*Paul Stamper runs his own heritage consultancy, Paul Stamper Heritage*

largely forgotten.

In part that's because of the extreme secrecy around the preparations for invasion, with participants and locals equally unaware of what was afoot, other than in the most general terms: the retaking – codenamed Operation Overlord – of Hitler's Fortress Europe. Another factor is that often little remains to be seen, as at south coast beaches like Hayling Island, Woolacombe and Slapton Sands where landings were practised, or at the Bude cliffs where US Rangers rehearsed the attack on the German gun batteries on Pointe du Hoc, overlooking Omaha Beach. (Training was thorough, in all weather conditions, and with heavy live firing and explosions to prepare the men for real battle.)

Elsewhere, however, structures of sometimes monumental scale survive, including the "hards" (eg Plymouth and Falmouth) where men and machines embarked on ships, and the sites (Lepe and Marchwood in Hampshire) where the ingenious concrete Mulberry harbours were constructed before being towed across the Channel. Two vast Mulberry

caissons remain stranded in Portland harbour, listed grade 2 for their significance.

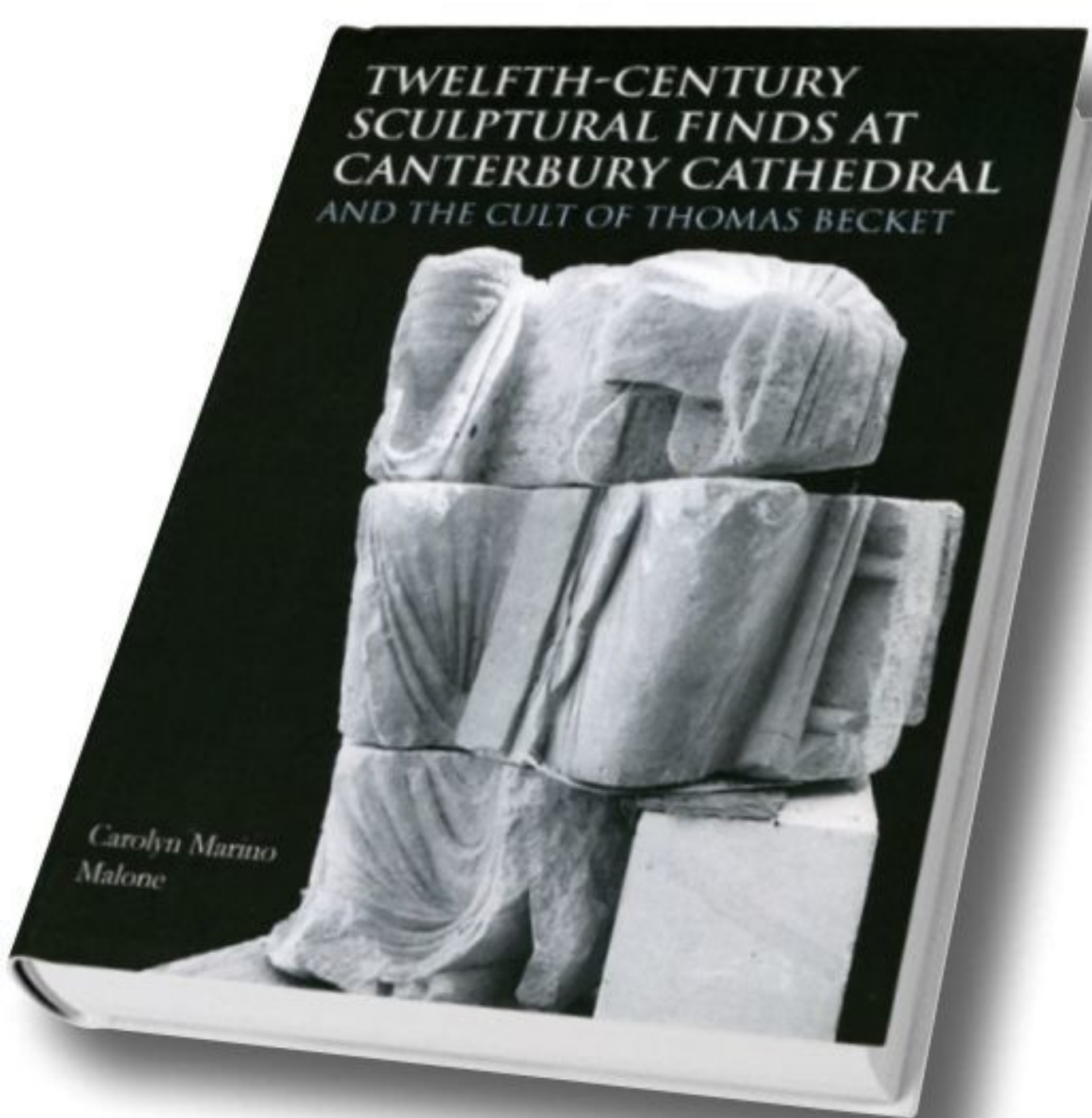
The "Hundred somethings" format of this book works well, and almost every page has one or two photos, some modern, many from 1944, all beautifully reproduced. Importantly, all aspects of D-Day are covered, not just the landings. After an Introduction setting out the timeline, and especially the build-up to June 6 over more than two years, sections treat in turn places associated with the command and control functions, training (50 bases in Scotland alone), logistic support, the loading of troops on ships and paratroopers in planes and gliders, and the bases from where air and naval support was provided. Mostly it's a tightly packed story of places, units and operations, and only occasionally are individual stories and experiences rehearsed. But the faces of the young men peering at the camera from landing craft, tanks and gliders leave us in no doubt of the human cost of this daring and vital enterprise. This is an extremely worthwhile publication, of real long-term value.

**Twelfth-Century Sculptural Finds at Canterbury Cathedral & the Cult of Thomas Becket**

by Carolyn Marino Malone

Oxbow Books May 2019

£55 pp265 hb ISBN 9781789252509

*Reviewed by Tim Tatton-Brown*

Not long after I went to Canterbury in 1975 to set up the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, I was amazed to find that the upper external masonry on the west side of the Great Cloister at Canterbury Cathedral had recently been demolished without record. It was then crudely rebuilt with new Box Ground stone, and later with Lepine stone. During this work, some remarkable 12th-century sculptural

fragments of exceptional quality were found in the fill. In the later 1970s I was shown some of these fragments in stores, when a few of them were going to be displayed at the west end of the cathedral crypt; in 1984 they were temporarily displayed at the *English Romanesque Art* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London.

Then in 2011, when I was in Los Angeles lecturing at UCLA and the University of Southern California, I was hosted at the latter by Carolyn Malone, professor of history of art at USC. She told me that she had been in Canterbury in 1970, and had photographed all the fragments that had come out of the west cloister. She also recorded, as far as she could, the exact bays in the west cloister where they had been found as reused masonry around 1396.

Malone returned to Canterbury briefly in 2012 and 2013, and after much work this important volume has now been published. Since the discovery of the exceptionally fine sculptures, several scholars have tried to work out where exactly they were located in the cathedral before they were taken out to the new cloister at the end of the 14th century. The book's first part is

Malone's own ingenious hypothesis that they were from a series of architectural screens in the western transept, made just after Thomas Becket's canonisation in 1173. Here was the exact place, known as "The Martyrdom", where Becket was murdered on December 29 1170, and where many of the first pilgrims came to be cured. This totally disrupted the monks' daily following of the Rule of St Benedict, and we know that by the later middle ages, an overpass (for the monks going to the choir) and an underpass (for pilgrims) system has been worked out. Malone suggests that this compartmentalisation started almost immediately after Becket's canonisation.

The second part of the book is a catalogue of all the known fragments, with photographs of all the stones. Very sadly, quite a number of these have now been lost, so this book is a unique record of them, though I hope that one day some may be rediscovered when all the dispersed fragments are gathered together again. This book should stimulate new discussions on the topography of this extraordinary cult, by far the most famous in western Europe. ■

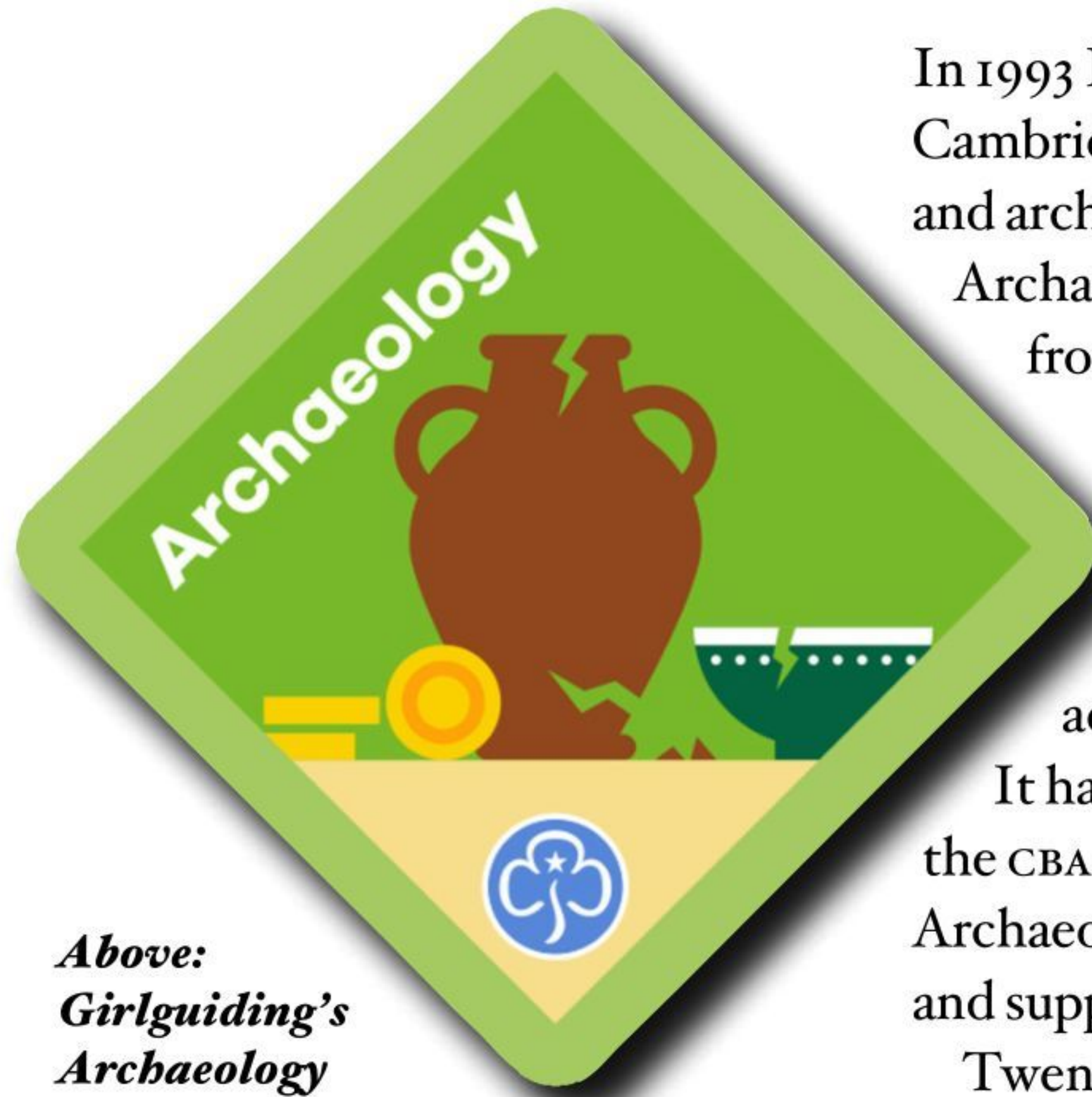
*Tim Tatton-Brown was consultant archaeologist to Canterbury Cathedral*



# Council for British Archaeology

## Correspondent

### Mike Heyworth reports on the Young Archaeologists' Club's successful efforts to engage young people



*Above: Girlguiding's Archaeology Brownie badge*

In 1993 I drove down to Cambridge to collect the papers and archive for the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC)

from its co-founder, Kate Pretty. The club had expanded to the point where one part-time person could no longer administer its activities.

It had been agreed that the CBA (Council for British Archaeology) would now run it and support its expansion.

Twenty-six years later, the club continues to be one of the most important parts of our strategy for engaging with young people across the UK. The latest annual survey reveals that there are now 73 local club branches – there were six in 1993 – run by over 500 volunteers. Between April 2018 and March 2019 they held around 730 events, attended by an average of 12 young

people who could choose from an estimated 9,500 places.

On average, each branch leadership team spends over 20 days per year planning, administering, devising and delivering their activities. This equates to an impressive 1,600 work days across the whole network: or, using the National Lottery Heritage Fund's equivalent monetary value for volunteer time, almost a quarter of a million pounds of investment in young people in archaeology.

#### YAC members

It is encouraging that the gender balance for young people attending YAC events was almost balanced, with the majority aged 8 to 11. Next year we will focus on engaging older members, and encouraging them to continue to be involved with the club beyond

the age of 16 as young leaders.

Most YAC members were from a White-British background (just under 89%, compared to 81.9% in the UK population), though a wide cross-section of ethnicities are represented. 6.6% of YAC members identify as having a learning disability such as dyslexia (national average just below 10%). Furthermore, 7.3% say they have an autism spectrum disorder (including Asperger's), significantly more than the national average of 1.1%.

#### YAC volunteers

In comparison to YAC members, volunteers who run the branches are mostly female, with only 30% male. There is a good mix of ages, the highest groups falling within the 25–40 and 41–55 categories, suggesting that our volunteers may have YAC-aged children attending, and may be working for affiliated organisations. Notably, 8.3% are under 18 and represent our young leaders, an area of primary focus going forward. This is relatively unusual for heritage volunteers who tend to be older, often over 55, so it is great to see younger people passing on their skills and experience to YAC members.

The CBA continues to provide training and support to YAC volunteer leaders. In 2019 the annual leaders' weekend was held in Oakham, Rutland, with a focus on excavation skills. Over 35 volunteers from 22 branches were able to attend, and a resource pack has been put together for those unable to be there – available through the YAC website at [www.yac-uk.org](http://www.yac-uk.org).

*Below: Flodden YAC at a community dig, Mordon, Northumberland*



JANE MILLER



## Activities

YAC members engage in a huge range of archaeological activities, taking part in excavations as well as experimental archaeology and community projects. Highlights from across the network between April 2018 and March 2019 include:

- Excavations across the UK, including Bangor working with the Bryn Celli Ddu Landscape Project,

### Dig Project

- Environmental archaeology, like processing samples at Bamburgh Castle with Flodden and York

- Guided history, such as a trip to Alva's old wool mills by Stirlingshire YAC and a visit to the Northwick Trail by Worcestershire with the local heritage environment record officer

the newly excavated finds from Norton Priory.

## Partnerships

In February 2019 the CBA signed a formal agreement with Archaeology Scotland to roll out their Heritage Heroes awards scheme throughout the YAC network, creating bespoke content for the YAC. The award scheme aims to:

- Improve young people's self-confidence and wellbeing through engagement with challenging heritage projects

- Inspire young people to develop a lifelong interest in the past

- Increase awareness of how to access heritage in schools, youth groups and similar organisations

- Help foster links between heritage organisations, community groups and young people.

We are also working with organisations like the Society for Children in the Past, the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and Ice Age Journeys, to develop resources and offer training to engage young people with archaeology. The YAC website provides free resources, with over 100 activities that anyone can download and use. Inevitably, other organisations ask our permission to use these resources and this year we have worked with Girlguiding, BBC Bitesize and the National Science Week to help develop activities for their events and organisations.

## Involvement

We also aim to encourage young people to get more involved in running YAC, and a steering group



JANE MILLER, IAN HILL/HARP ARCHAEOLOGY

**Above: Graveyard survey at Hume Castle in the Scottish Borders, Flodden YAC**

has been set up over the last year with several young people involved. This is an area we hope to expand in the future, as well as finding ways for YAC members to continue to be involved with archaeology and supporting young people in the future.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has recently published some ideas on how to involve young people in heritage arising out of their recent Kick the Dust programme (see [www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/ways-meaningfully-involve-young-people-heritage](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/ways-meaningfully-involve-young-people-heritage)).

*Mike Heyworth is director of the CBA. This article is based on the work of Joanne Kirton, the CBA's youth engagement manager, and her recent YAC annual report for 2018–19. The CBA is grateful to all those who support YAC and our wider youth engagement work, particularly Historic England, together with English Heritage, Cadw and Historic Environment Scotland* ■

**Below: Leaders Weekend dig at Oakham Castle during excavation of a 14th–15th-century building, possibly a brewhouse**



CBA



**Above: YAC Dig It! competition winner, Eva at Kildavie, Isle of Mull**

Leicester joining excavations at Bradgate Park and Greater Manchester's visit to the dig at Hoghton Tower

- Surveys using total stations, dumpy levels and offset methods, such as that undertaken at Grafton Flyford by Worcestershire YAC

- Graveyard, memorial and building surveys, as undertaken by Pontefract, who recorded parts of Pontefract Castle, and Leeds, who undertook a second memorial survey and compared it to their results from two years ago

- Experimental archaeology, such as Sheffield YAC building their own Iron Age roundhouses and North Wiltshire learning to knap flint

- Making videos and podcasts about their clubs or local archaeology, such as Barnsley & Rotherham's video about the Newcomen Beam Engine Boiler

- Craft activities, such as tile making, Greek pottery creation and so much more: Fenland YAC mummied oranges

- Fieldwalking and geophysics, like that undertaken by Orkney on their inaugural session on the island and the cropmark survey carried out by St Alban's after the hot summer in 2018

- Visits to museums, archives and other sites of interest, such as Orkney's recent visit to Skara Brae and West Wiltshire's walking tour of the Avebury landscape

- Foreshore archaeology, such as North Wiltshire and Bexley combing the banks of the Thames with the Thames Discovery Programme

- Artefact handling and curation, including Ayrshire YAC working with finds from the renovation and test-pitting at Dundonald Castle and Merseyside & Dee exploring



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The CBA Young Archaeologists' Club is the only UK-wide club where 8-16 year olds can participate in real archaeology and learn why it matters. The CBA Festival of Archaeology puts on thousands of public events every year.

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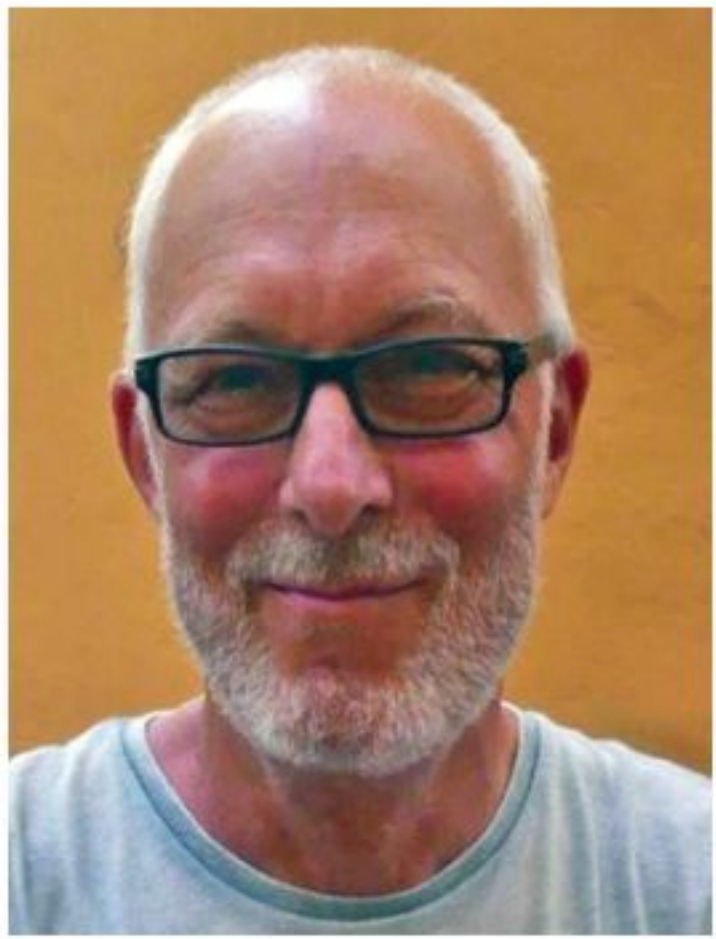
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The CBA is a charity registered in England & Wales (287815) and Scotland (SCO41971)





Bob Sydes, listed buildings caseworker for England at the Council for British Archaeology, presents examples from the council's files

## 46. Eastney Beach anti-tank defences



SIMON MARTIN

On several occasions over the past two years the CBA (Council for British Archaeology) has been consulted on proposals that affect heritage assets from the recent past, including 1930s and '40s military infrastructure such as former airfields and coastal defences. The significance and context of superficially unattractive utilitarian concrete structures are not often fully recognised by archaeologists or developers. Proposals that threaten remains are rarely challenged by planners, unless the structures happen to be listed or scheduled. Even then, their significance to local communities can be overlooked.

Recently, residents at Eastney near Portsmouth have contacted the CBA about threats to listed grade 2 early 1940 anti-tank defences on a shingle beach. Among the best preserved anti-invasion remains on the south coast of England, they comprise some 280 concrete blocks along 400m between two scheduled monuments, Eastney Fort East and Fort Cumberland.

The threat comes from proposals for residential development immediately to the north of the beach, which will require strengthening of sea defences. Consequently, the anti-tank remains

would need to be lifted, stored and re-sited, an act that Historic England has deemed to be "less than substantial harm" in national planning policy speak. The CBA feels that such an act would indeed result in "substantial harm". This difference of opinion matters, as local planning officers tend to give more weight to Historic England than the National Amenity Societies.

Both organisations agree however that there should be a separate listed building consent application over the matter. The CBA has recommended that a decision on the current application is deferred until an application has been lodged, consulted on and determined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, all relevant local planning policies and the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. We also advised that the application should be accompanied by a detailed heritage statement prepared by a specialist in Second World War defence heritage.

Unfortunately, such specialists are thin on the ground, which raises issues regarding how we deal with the archaeology of the recent past, principally evidence from the 1939–45

war. As many readers will remember, the CBA managed the Defence of Britain Project (1995–2002) and the Home Front Legacy Project (2014–18). These both set out to record and make publicly available the physical evidence and oral histories of these periods. Although Defence of Britain data were incorporated into historic environment records (HERs), these have rarely been updated and they lack necessary detail to help understand significance. Alarming, we understand that Portsmouth City Council does not currently maintain an historic environment record or contribute to the maintenance of the Hampshire HER.

Individuals and communities tend to connect with the recent past more passionately than with earlier periods, due to immediate family or community memories or clear physical connections with places. Historic England's conservation-principles approach to understanding significance (which we have noted before in this series) was in part designed to help capture the concept of this communal value. We will continue to stand up for communities, highlighting the importance of local views, and will watch this case with interest. ■





# What to make of far-right rituals at ancient sites?

Woden's Folk, a religious movement whose followers mix respect for Hitler and reworked Norse mythology with an obsession about litter, has been found to have an interest in prehistoric monuments. In August the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the far-right group had been conducting rituals at Avebury, a World Heritage Site complex of megaliths and earthworks, and nearby Wayland's Smithy, a Neolithic burial mound, where swastikas had been found carved into trees. The National Trust, which manages both sites on behalf of English Heritage, had told the police.

Is this a bizarre sideshow or something more serious? How should we respond? It's difficult to know how many people are involved, and sometimes Woden's Folk looks like little more than a few troubled individuals nursing a fantasy of ancient Britain. Whatever the case, the issues

are not trivial, and concern us all. What's going on?

Shocked archaeologists responded online. Little thought, said Neil Ackerman, "is given to how [published research] will be consumed and used for... political ends". Jonathan Last noted that "for all the radical prehistories produced within the academy... the version presented to the public at heritage sites is often reduced to a conservative, nostalgic narrative of a lost rural England", and criticised "journalists content to trot out the simplistic interpretations of migrations and ethnicity produced by some genetic studies". Howard Williams asked for better archaeological engagement with post-Neolithic histories: it's wrong, he said, to define Wayland's Smithy as prehistoric when it has a continuous life from the Neolithic to today.

Blogging about Woden's Folk in 2015, Wulfinga wrote of how, "When we started the English Resistance through a Torchlight Rite at Avebury and Wayland's Smithy, we started the long struggle to take back our Ancient Sites of Albion." New members of the Folk, reported the *Telegraph*, had to commit to the "struggle" for the "Folk-Nation, the English, and for our comrades... where[ever] the White Race has settled."

The usurpers from whom Wulfinga sought to take back control were "so-called 'pagans', 'wiccans' and 'new-agers'"; tourism is "sapping the power" of ancient sites, while "a flood... of outlanders who have imported violence, crime and Global Terrorism have been allowed into England." Engagements with antiquity take many forms. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the issues raised by Woden's Folk can be dismissed as inconsequential.

Events and analyses in Scandinavia are, from one perspective, ahead of those in the UK. Neither UKIP nor the Brexit Party, Britain's two significant populist groups, currently has a member in parliament. Denmark, Norway and Sweden, however, have had far-right parties with seats in national parliaments for some years. As Elisabeth Niklasson and Herdis Hølleland have argued (*Journal of Social Archaeology* 18, 2018, 121–48), this makes it possible to

see their impact on heritage policy. In Denmark, for example, Dansk Folkeparti has negotiated budget provisions for projects that strengthened the nation's seafaring image, reinforced global identity and highlighted imperial legacy (but failed to support a women's history museum). Unsurprisingly, archaeologists have taken advantage of the support.

UKIP's 2015 election manifesto resonates with Dansk Folkeparti's policies. It is exceptionally strong on heritage, promising a Cabinet minister of state for heritage & tourism, planning-legislation that favours conservation over development, and – a holy grail of conservationists – no VAT on repairs to listed buildings. But as in Denmark, these gifts come with strings. UKIP would "claim back our heritage from the 'chattering classes' who have denigrated our culture", and emphasise "the unique influence Britain has had in shaping the modern world". In Britain as in Scandinavia, far-right support for archaeology subtly promotes a particular vision of national identity.

Amy Hale, a perceptive American observer of the contemporary Pagan scene, has argued that heritage is used to make white nationalism sound more sympathetic. The far right believes in an ethnically pure antiquity, a fiction which decades of archaeology emphasising cultural continuity and downplaying migration have not helped to combat. What have been deemed innocent misunderstandings or "alternative archaeologies" are often unwittingly steeped in racist ideology, in notions of national purity and of unchanging culture (see Spoilheap Jul/Aug 2008/101 and Jan/Feb 2010/110); we can see the same forces at work in early environmental movements' fondness for white rural idylls.

In a 2013 survey, said Neil Ackerman, of 837 archaeologists only seven described themselves as non-white: were archaeologists representative of the wider UK population, 50 would have been non-white in 1991, and 117 in 2011. Woden's Folk is racist and deluded. But archaeologists should be aware that unintended racism can be easy to miss. As a group, we may not be the best placed to spot it. ■





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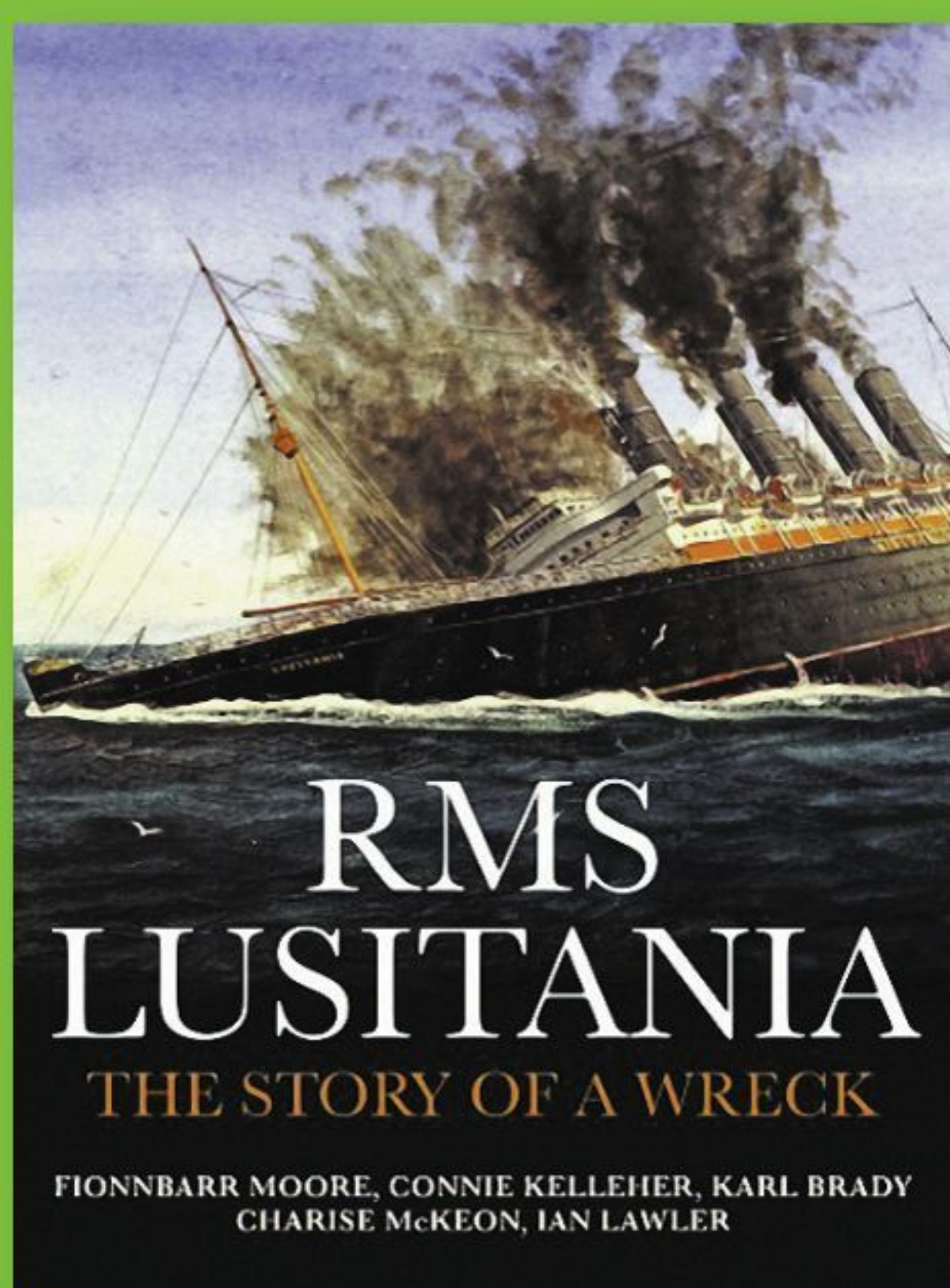


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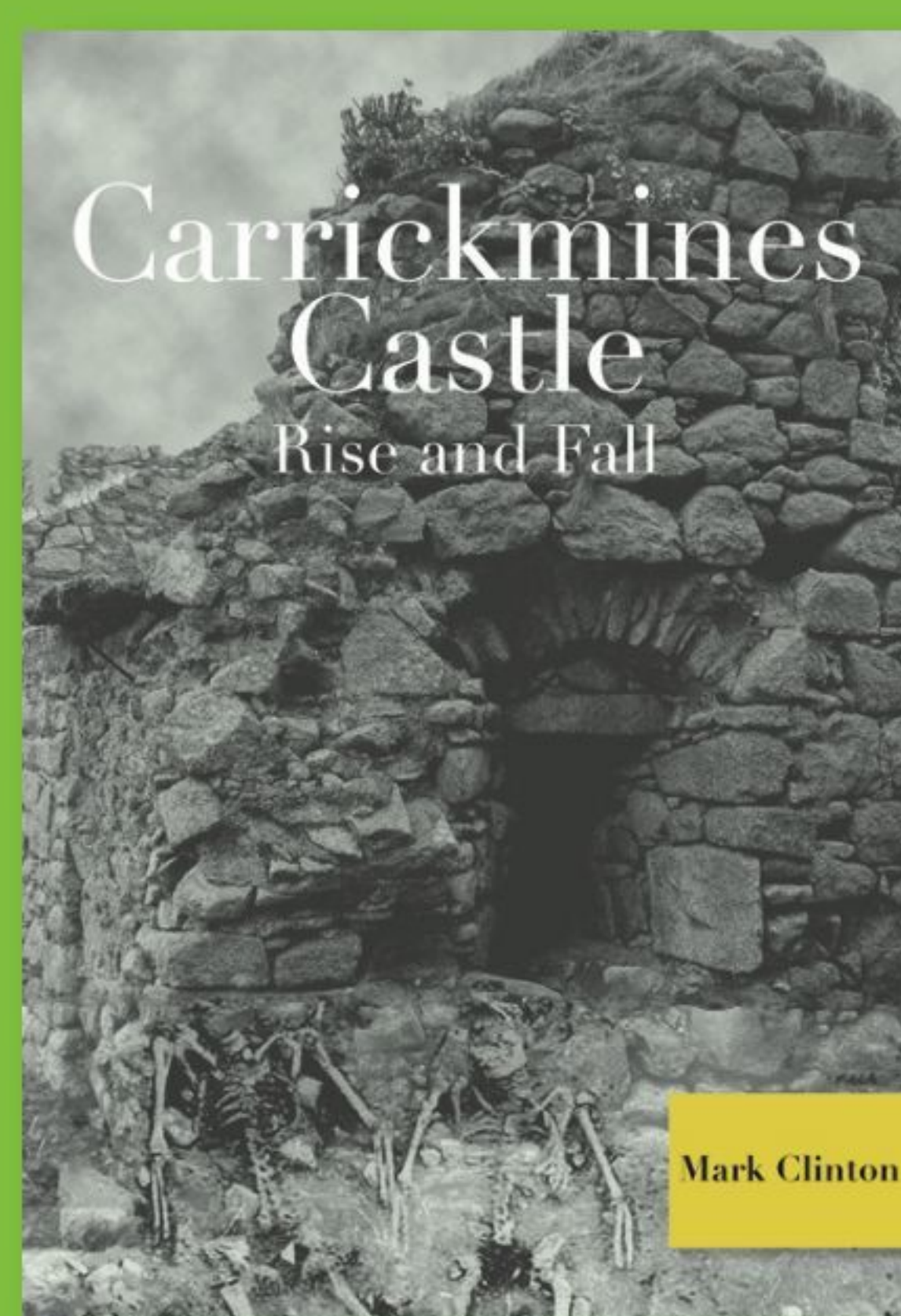
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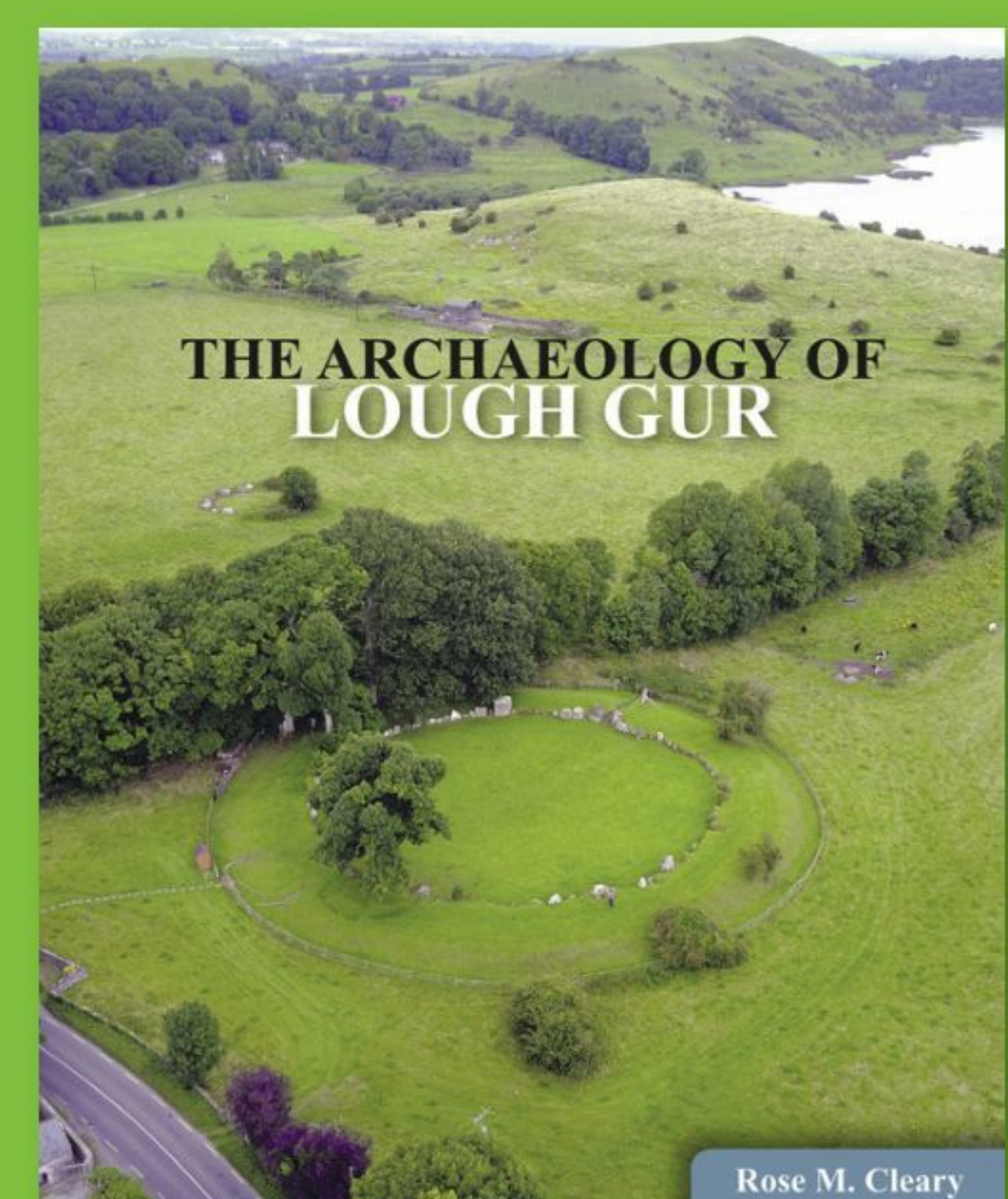
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